Mysteries of the Neapolitan Convents.

Lith. of Hallagy & Eckhardt Hartford

3281

THE

MYSTERIES

OF THE

NEAPOLITAN CONVENTS:

WITH A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE EARLY LIFE OF THE AUTHORESS.

BY

HENRIETTA CARACCIOLO,

EX-BENEDICTINE NUN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FOURTH ITALIAN EDITION, BY

J. S. REDFIELD,

LATE U. S. CONSUL AT OTRANTO AND BRINDISI, ITALY.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY REV. JOHN DOWLING, D. D.,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF ROMANISM," ETC.

HARTFORD:

PUBLISHED BY A. S. HALE & CO.

87 ASYLUM STREET.

1867.

BX4210
.C3A55

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1867, by
A. SIDNEY D. REDFIELD,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of New York.

ROCKWELL & ROLLINS, STEREOTYPERS AND PRINTERS,
122 WASHINGTON STREET, BOSTON.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

In writing these Memoirs, it has been my intention to confirm, so far as my experience goes, the reasonableness, and the justice of the measure now before the Italian government, suppressing monasticism; and, at the same time, to undeceive those, if there remain any, who really believe that these institutions are the asylums of all the religious virtues.

That the individuals confined in these convents are entirely useless to society, there are none, at the present day, who are ignorant. But this is not sufficient. I propose also to show, in the revelations I shall make, that they are not only useless, and even noxious, but that they represent an order of ideas long since effete, and that they are in direct opposition to the opinions of the civilized world in the nineteenth century.

Without monastical seclusion, would so many beautiful young women ever allow themselves to be buried by unnatural parents, or through the artifices of their confessors, in prisons inaccessible to every social illumination, to every voice of humanity? Or would they ever be tempted to make a vow, which snatches them away, irrecoverably, from the duties and affections of the family, for which they were especially created by God, and, after a con-

sumptive existence, descend prematurely to the tomb, denied, in their last illness and death, the care and sympathy of mothers, sisters, or friends? I know that they are not few nor powerless, those who wear the cassock, as well as those who do not, who are still partisans of monasticism; and that it may be objected, that if my judgment of the effects of monasticism be true, all the nuns, since they have now the liberty to do so, would, ere this, have abandoned the cloister, and that the convents ought now to be uninhabited. It is very certain that this has not happened to any great extent, especially in these our meridional provinces.

To this I reply, that the confessors of these unfortunate creatures make it their especial care to depress the spirits of their penitents, instilling into their minds egotism and misanthropy, which certainly form no part of the religion of Christ, and making them believe that outside of the parlatorio are to be found only perdition and hell, and that the maledictions of heaven and the thunders of Rome are held in readiness to be launched upon the head of the poor creature who passes the threshold of the convent after once having taken the vows. The nun who believes these things — and they who dare to doubt them are few — can scarcely be expected to commit what she is taught to regard so great a sacrilege.

If it should be thought that I have been silent in regard to some particulars, or that I have purposely left in the shade some vicissitudes of my own life, which were not unworthy to see the light, I can only say, that I have felt constrained, in several instances, to strike out from these Memoirs, the advantages of some

colorings and dramatic reliefs, which would, I am well convinced, have made them more attractive. But this loss is entirely my own; these excisions have been made out of respect due to the dead, — to families as well as to myself.

ENRICHETTA CARACCIOLO.

CASTELLAMARE, 1864.

TRANSLATOR TO THE READER.

THE "Mysteries of the Neapolitan Convents" was written mainly with a view to expose to the world the monastic system, as it has existed in Italy until within a few years; and as it exists, of course, to-day in every country in which it is tolerated; and incidentally, to justify the action of the Italian government in suppressing the institution of monasticism in that country.

From the date of this decree, some six or seven years back, no more monks or nuns can be made there. Monastical property has been confiscated, the monks and nuns now living being allowed, by the government, a small daily stipend for their subsistence, and when these die there will be an end of monasticism in what now comprises the kingdom of Italy.

The circulation of this book there has contributed, in no slight degree, it is conceded, to reconcile the people to the action of the government, by placing before them, in all its enormity, a veritable account of the wickedness and irreligion which are found to exist in these institutions, under the garb of the religious life.

The authoress has shown that the shutting up of young girls in the seclusion and inertia of convent life is the worst possible use

to which they can be put. That separating them from the world, from intercourse with their families and friends, and placing them where they are compelled to regard their priestly confessor as father, mother, brother, and sister, they frequently come, naturally enough perhaps, to look upon him also as a *lover;* and that, in consequence, the vice of prostitution is by no means uncommon in convents. That this monotonous life leads also to insanity, and that although, in the monastical nomenclature, the nuns are called the "Spouses of Christ," and are generally supposed to lead a pure and holy life before God, yet she shows that vice and crime of almost every description are as common within these sacred (?) enclosures, as they are in the world outside.

Of all this we apprehend the reader will be fully convinced before he finishes the book.

That the authoress has "nothing extenuated nor aught set down in malice," some one may be found, perhaps, to doubt. If this sceptical reader could have had the advantage which the translator has had of living for several years in these Neapolitan provinces, and of hearing all the statements in this book confirmed by the most intelligent Italians, — even by some priests, who belonged to the liberal party, — and of reading the reports of the criminal courts, of the trials of monks and priests, which have taken place there within a few years, for crimes committed within these temples dedicated to God, — to the enormity of which there is nothing recorded in this book which affords any parallel, — he would no longer doubt that Signorina Caracciolo* might have used much stronger colors than she has used in the picture she has given of convent life.

* Pronounced Car-ratsh-e-o-lo.

The judicious reader will not fail to observe that the revelations in this book afford no argument, nor is it claimed that they do, against the Roman Catholic religion itself; but, against priestly intolerance, hypocrisy, and bigotry, and against the institution of monasticism as it exists to-day, it is reeking with such stubborn facts and scathing arguments as cannot fail to command the attention of the most indifferent reader.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., Sept., 1867.

INTRODUCTION.

THE deeply interesting narrative, written and published in the Italian language, a few years ago, from the pen of a noble lady, a grand-daughter of Genaro Caracciolo, Prince of Forino, under the title of "The Mysteries of the Neapolitan Convents, with a Brief Sketch of the early Life of the Author," of which the following is a translation, is one of the most remarkable of the productions which the reviving spirit of Italian freedom has evoked, within the last few years, since priestly tyranny has lost its power in that classic and beautiful, but long oppressed, and down-trodden land, to fetter the press, and since awakened Italy has been in a state of transition from despotism and anarchy to constitutional liberty and unity.

The American translator of the work, well known as a veteran publisher of the city of New York, has enjoyed unusual facilities for his task as a translator, and for gaining a thorough and practical knowledge of the working of the Romish system in Italy, having resided for several years in the Neapolitan dominions, and in the very midst of the scenes so graphically brought before the eye of the reader, in the interesting narrative of the ex-Benedictine Nun, Signorina Caracciolo.

Had the authoress of this volume dared to issue this exposure of convent life, in any part of the Pope's dominions, she would have soon felt the weight of the strong arm of papal power and vindictiveness. Thank God, the temporal dominions of the Pope have been, of late years, rapidly contracting in dimensions; while the degree of freedom enjoyed in other portions of Italy has been constantly increasing, just in proportion as the power and influence of the Pope and priests have been diminishing. Had any one presumed to write and to print such a work as the following, in the kingdom of Naples, a dozen years ago, during the reign of the cruel and bigoted Ferdinand, that pet and tool of Pope Pius IX., the author would have been soon effectually silenced, either by the executioner, or by being consigned to those gloomy and terrible dungeons, where, in the year 1857, Mr. Gladstone found not less than thirteen thousand suffering patriots, the languishing victims of royal and priestly vengeance.

The ten years that have passed away, since the friends of liberty and Protestantism were horrified and electrified by the terrible revelations of the unveiled prisons of Naples, have been fruitful in great and glorious events. The bloody tyrants of Naples have been driven from their throne; Garibaldi has marched through the land, unfurling the banner of freedom; the larger portion of the domains of the Pope has cast off his hateful rule; Venice, at last, has been annexed to Italy; and now, with the exception of a petty principality around the city of Rome, about the size of the State of Connecticut, all Italy is united in one mild and peaceful government, under Victor Emanuel; while throughout the entire peninsula, with the insignificant exception men-

tioned, the press is unfettered; liberty of conscience is guaranteed by the law; the Bible in the vernacular may be circulated and read in Florence, and Turin, and Venice, and even in Naples, as freely as in London, or in New York; * and what is, perhaps, as signal a blessing as any we have named, considered with respect to the future prosperity of Italy, the convents, both male and female, have been suppressed, the lands and possessions used for ages to support in idleness myriads of worse than useless monks and nuns have been confiscated to the government, and their lazy and worthless inmates have been sent forth into the world, to earn at least a portion of their living, like honest men and women.

In accomplishing this last-named result, the work now given to the American public, in an English dress, effected a most important part. When published in Italian, it was, at once, seen to be a thorough, fearless, and authentic exposure, of the misery, the slavery, and the horrors of female convent life, and of the tyranny and lust of the priestly libertines, who, under the guise of confessors, have free ingress to these female prison-houses, and possess an almost absolute control over the bodies and the souls of their wretched inmates.

* The impotent rage and dismay of the papal priesthood, at the advance of religious freedom in Naples, and throughout the kingdom of Italy, may be seen from the following extract from a recent pastoral of the Cardinal Archbishop of Naples. "Audacity has arrived at such a height," says he, "as to erect in Naples, in the midst of a people wholly Catholic, and in one of the most beautiful and popular quarters, a public temple to Protestanism." From the language and spirit of this, and similar documents, we may gather what would be the consequences to Protestantism and to freedom, should the Pope ever regain his lost power and influence in Italy.

Written by a lady, belonging to a princely family, well known as one of the most noble and distinguished of the former kingdom of Naples; detailing, as the work does, in a style which possesses, at once, all the charm of a romance, with all the simplicity and verisimilitude of truth itself, the actual interior of every-day convent life, by one, who simply relates what she had herself seen and experienced; published amid the very scenes she so vividly describes, in the immediate vicinity of the convents where she had been immured, and where she herself and the other actors in the history were extensively and familiarly known, and where, consequently, her statements might have been easily refuted if exaggerated or false, yet where no one of the parties inculpated dared to deny the literal truth of her statements, — it is not strange that such a work, written under such circumstances, should have produced a wonderful excitement among the Italian people, and contributed, as it unquestionably did, in a large degree, to that enlightenment of the public mind of all classes, from the prince to the peasant, which eventually resulted in those decrees for the suppression of monasteries and nunneries, which in a few years will rid the whole of reconstructed Italy of these swarming nests of tyranny, laziness, impurity, and corruption, which have, for ages, been the curse of every popish country, but more than all others, of poor, pope-ridden and priest-ridden Italy.

Speaking of the present work, in the original Italian, says a gifted clergyman (the Rev. J. A. Wylie, LL. D.), who had spent much time in that country, and was, therefore, well qualified to write of "the awakening of Italy, and the crisis of Rome:" —

"But why reason from the laws of the human constitution, when there are so many facts at hand telling us what convents have been always and everywhere? But the other day Henrietta Caracciolo opened the doors of the Neapolitan cloisters, and bade us look with our own eyes. Her womanly delicacy has partly concealed the hideousness which she dared not nakedly discover; still no reader of 'The Mysteries of the Neapolitan Convents,' of ordinary penetration, can fail to see the awful sufferings of which these places are the abodes, and the shameful wickedness enacted within their walls. In the convent, there is no moral light and air; and to expect love to blossom in a convent is like expecting color in the darkness, or life in a sepulchre. The heart, finding nothing without, turns in upon itself, and becomes the seat of foul desires, or of evil passions. Her description reminds us of the picture which Paul draws of the heathen world,—'without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.' Instead of a paradise of purity and love, the cloister, as here drawn, is a pandemonium, the inmates of which hiss and sting like serpents, and torment one another like furies. And then the vow, which makes their sufferings immortal, leaves them hope of escape only in the grave. Never was there on earth slavery more foul or bitter; and never was there decree more humane and merciful than that by which Italy declared that this bondage should no longer disgrace its soil or oppress its children."

Such a moral cancer could be cured by no mild or external remedies. If eradicated at all, it must be by the knife of entire and unsparing excision.

Some few attempts had been made, at different times, by zealous and well-meaning men in the Romish church, to *reform* these institutions without destroying them, and to lessen the disorders and impurities of convent life. They speedily found, however, that the task was a more formidable one than that of Hercules, in attempting to cleanse the fabled Augean stables, and soon abandoned it in despair.

Such an abortive effort was made near the close of the last century, about the time of the French Revolution, by Scipio di Ricci, an Italian Roman Catholic bishop, who, at the command of Leopold, the reigning Duke of Tuscany, undertook the task of inquiring into, and, if possible, of rooting out the terrible abominations which were known to prevail in the convents of that part of the Italian peninsula. In the disclosures made at that time, by this Romish bishop, all, and more than all that is charged in the present work against these "holds of every foul spirit," is proved without the shadow of a doubt. In that work, there are given several letters and memorials from prioresses and others of the more aged and virtuous inmates of the Italian nunneries, who mourned over these horrible corruptions, and sighed in vain for their correction. A few sentences from one or two of these letters, descriptive of the nature and extent of these immoralities of the monks and nuns, may be regarded as a specimen of many. Says the aged Flavia Peraccini, Prioress of the Convent of Catherine of Pistoia: "It would require both time and memory to recollect what has occurred during the twenty-four years that I have had to do with monks, and all that I have heard tell of them. With the exception of three or four, all that I ever knew,

alive or dead, are of the same character. They have all the same maxims and the same conduct. . . . The priests are the husbands of the nuns and the lay brothers of the lay sisters. . . . They deceive the innocent, and even those that are more circumspect, and it would need a miracle to converse with them and not fall. 'Poor creatures,' said I to an English provincial, 'they think they are leaving the world to escape danger, and they only meet with greater.' God is my witness," adds this Roman Catholic lady-prioress, "I speak without passion. The monks have never done anything to me personally, to make me dislike them; but I will say that so iniquitous a race as the monks nowhere exists. . . . Do not suppose that this is the case in our convent alone. It is just the same at Lucca, at Prato, at Pisa, at Perugia. Everywhere it is the same; everywhere the same disorders, everywhere the same abuses prevail. Let the superiors suspect as they may, they do not know even the smallest part of the enormous wickedness that goes on between the monks and the nuns."

One of the other letters is addressed to the Grand Duke himself, by a nun of the Convent of Castiglion Fiorentino, who describes herself as "about fifty years of age," in which, after detailing similar corruptions and vices in the convent, she requests the duke to institute the necessary investigations into these disorders, without making known the fact that she had communicated with him. The reason she assigns for this request speaks volumes as to the terrible internal condition of these prison-houses of misery and despair. "For," says she, "if what I now write to you were known, it would be sufficient to cause me to be poisoned by my companions, who are totally given up to vice."

Testimonies such as these, not from Protestant sources, but from the inmates of the convents themselves, confirming, as they do, most conclusively the testimony of the authoress of the present volume, must be admitted even by Roman Catholics as absolutely conclusive proof of the incurable corruption of these institutions.

It may be asked, however, if such proofs had been previously given to the world, why had not these institutions been long ago suppressed? And what need is there of the present work as an additional proof of the damning corruption which had already been so fully established?

To the first of these questions it may be replied: Till within a few years, throughout the whole of Italy, the influence of Pope, and cardinals, and priests has, for ages, been paramount and all-pervading. The fact of the debasing slavery and the licentiousness and corruption of the convents would to them have been no reason for their suppression. Papal Rome has ever remained true to the inspired description of her character. "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth."

The brave and patriotic Garibaldi, born and bred amid these scenes, knew whereof he affirmed, when lately, addressing the students of the University of Pavia, he spoke of the cause of his country's degradation, and said: "In the midst of Italy, at its very heart, there is a cancer called Popery,— an imposture called Popery. Yes, young men, we still have a formidable enemy, the more formidable because it exists among the ignorant classes, where it rules by falsehood, because it is sacrilegiously covered

with the cloak of religion. Its smile is the smile of Satan. This enemy, young men, is the Popish priest! — with few exceptions, the priests!"

To the second of these questions, — what need of yet another exposure of the abominations of the convent system? — it may be replied: The minds of the Italian people were prepared by recent events for this work at the time of the publication of the original; and the minds of the American public are prepared at the present juncture for the publication of this work in an English translation. The terrible revelations of Bishop Ricci have been cited in confirmation of the present work; but these revelations were made many years ago, and few of the present generation, either in Europe or America, have ever heard of them; there was need, therefore, of a work, such as "The Mysteries of the Neapolitan Convents," to convince the Italian people that these institutions were too radically corrupt for even the hope of reformation, and that the cause of humanity, as well as that of decency and morality, demanded their entire and universal suppression.

The suppression of the monasteries and nunneries throughout the whole of Italy, with the exception of the papal States, was successfully accomplished, chiefly through the energy and firmness of Count Cavour, prime minister to King Victor Emanuel. In the session of the Chamber of Deputies for 1864, it was enacted that, "The religious orders should be no longer recognized by the state; that their houses should be suppressed, and their goods placed under an ecclesiastical board; and that the members of the suppressed corporations should acquire their civil and political rights from the date of the publication of the law."

The number of these institutions existing in Italy at the time of the suppression will sound startling to American and to Protestant ears. Let it teach them to beware of the gradual, but steady and rapid growth, in their own land, of these same useless and corrupt institutions, which have been spewed out, even from papal countries of the Old World, as a curse, an abomination, and a disgrace.

The number of convents actually suppressed in Italy was 2,382. Of these, 1,506 were male convents or monasteries, and 876 were female convents or nunneries. The value of the property possessed by them was forty million lire, or about eight millions of dollars. The number of the useless drones who inhabited these swarming hives was 15,494 monks, and 18,198 nuns; 4,468 lay brothers, and 7,671 lay sisters; besides 13,441 monks of the mendicant orders, and 3,967 lay brothers; making a total of 63,239 persons. For these figures, taken from State papers, furnished by a member of the Parliament of Italy, we are indebted to the work of Dr. Wylie, before referred to. As this army of monks and nuns, thus turned adrift upon the world, had lived perfectly useless lives, and but a few of them were acquainted with any useful occupation, a small pension was granted them during life. "In Naples alone, according to the '*Conciliatore*' of that city, not fewer than eleven convents of monks and six of nuns were suppressed during the first half of 1865. A few years more, and the last mendicant monk in Italy, who has worn sandals and borne wallet, will be carried to the tomb, and the country completely freed from an incubus which has for ages crushed it." It is honor enough for the work of

Henrietta Caracciolo, now introduced to the American public, to have contributed to a result so full of blessing and of promise to the beautiful country of her birth.

Would that a copy of this work, now given to the English-speaking American public, could be placed in every Protestant family in the United States! And in Roman Catholic families, too; for there are many such who are beginning to distrust the teachings of their priests, and to suspect the utility and the purity of the nunneries that are springing up throughout the land, yawning to engulf their daughters in the same vortices of slavery and corruption, as those from which the ex-Benedictine nun who wrote this volume was so happy to be released, and which are so graphically and truthfully described in her interesting narrative.

If such a circulation were given to this work, I believe that many a Protestant parent, now unsuspectingly or heedlessly entrusting a son or a daughter to the male and female Jesuits who are filling the land with papal convents, under the guise of educational institutions, would see the folly and the wickedness of a course so suicidal to the best interests of their children for time and for eternity; many a Protestant young lady about to listen to the seducing persuasions of the wily Jesuits, who would entice her to enter these popish seminaries, would fly from them as she would from a serpent or an adder; and perchance some poor Catholic girl, too, about to utter the irrevocable vow, warned by the example and the terrible experience of Henrietta Caracciolo, would draw back from the fearful gulf before her, and have reason forever to thank God and the writer of this book

for the light that has warned her of the terrible abyss of misery and despair, before she had made the fatal plunge. American convents, awed into at least an appearance of decency by the Protestant sentiment of the country, may throw a more impenetrable veil of concealment over their dark proceedings; but human nature is the same everywhere; their character is the same; no less than Italian convents here described are they all dark prison-houses, to those who enter them, of slavery, misery, corruption, and despair.

Strange that they should ever exist in these free and enlightened United States! Stranger still that they should sometimes grow and flourish through the patronage and support of Protestant Americans! But, strangest of all, that American politicians should sell themselves to Rome, and buy Catholic votes with subsidies drawn from the pockets of Protestant tax-payers to these un-American, popish institutions! Let such time-servers and trucklers to an effete and degrading and tyrannical superstition, learn, from the perusal of the present volume, what the example of a noble Italian woman can teach them, of the inconsistency of such conduct with their characters as professed patriots, as Americans, as Protestants!

J. DOWLING.

NEW YORK, September, 1867.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION, by Dr. Dowling, ... 13

CHAPTER I.

INFANCY.

Birth — My father removes to Bari — Singular event — Return to Naples — Straitened circumstances — My father appointed Governor of Reggio — An amusing English sea-captain — Voyage to Messina — Reception at Reggio, . . . 35

CHAPTER II.

EARLY LOVES.

Carlo ——— My unhappy passion for him — Disappointment and distress at his marrying another — Visit of King Ferdinand to Reggio — Accident to my sister Josephine — Alarming illness of my sister and myself — Domenico . 43

CHAPTER III.

JEALOUSY.

The three F's — Domenico very attentive — His grandfather demands my hand in marriage, from my parents, for his grandson — They are offended, and Domenico is prohibited from visiting our house — His terrible jealousy — My mother's

anger — Domenico more jealous than ever, and my mother more determined — Description of the grand festa of the Assumption at Messina — Rupture of the relations existing between Domenico and myself — Peace, ... 58

CHAPTER IV.

SORROW.

Earthquake at Reggio — We fly for safety to the piazza — Meet Domenico — His interview and reconciliation with my mother — He goes to Naples — We return to our house — Sudden illness of my father — His death, ... 81

CHAPTER V.

THE CLOISTER.

Funeral of my father — Return to Naples — We meet Domenico there — We mutually pledge ourselves to each other — He returns to Reggio — His jealousy — My mother breaks off the match — A servant of my aunt, the Abbess of San Gregorio, brings me a present of confectionery, and informs me that the nuns of that convent have voted to admit me — Astounding news — I demand an explanation from my mother, who assures me that it is her own work, and that she is driven to it by her stinted means, as well as by the determination to prevent my marriage with Domenico — She assures me that I may leave the convent at the end of a couple of months, if I do not like it — Visit the convent with her — First impressions — My mother thanks the nuns, according to custom, for admitting me — Return home — Preparations — Marriage of my sister Josephine — Entrance into the convent — Sensation of horror, . 89

CHAPTER VI.

THE ABANDONMENT.

My mother deserts me — Two young nuns wait upon me around the convent — Description of the building and its appointments, pictures, etc. — Extracts from

the old chronicle of Fulvia Caracciolo — Anxiety of the nuns that I should determine at once to take the veil — Paolina — Jealousy among the nuns — Angiola Maria — Visit of my mother, who cruelly deceives me — Illness produced by my incarceration, ... 105

CHAPTER VII.

ECLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS OF NAPLES AND OTHER OF THE ITALIAN STATES.

The nation one vast monastical congregation — General statistics of monasticism — Number of establishments, priests, etc., etc., in Naples — List of the monasteries and convents, with the number of their inhabitants — Results, . 126

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENES AND CUSTOMS IN THE CONVENT.

Mental characteristics of the nuns — Extracts from an ancient chronicle — An account of the assassination of a Genoese merchant — The confession — Substitution of priests for the monks at the confessional — I go to confession for the first time in the convent — Caresses from the priest on this occasion — Such caresses general — A change of confessors — Silly twattle of the new canonico — Maddalena jealous — Endeavor to obtain still another confessor — Thwarted — A tempest in a teapot — Disreputable *liaisons* between the confessors and their penitents — Wiles employed by the former to corrupt the latter, ... 138

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIRACULOUS BELL.

I put on the dress of the educanda — Endeavor to hold my mother to her promise to take me out of the convent — My confessor and the nuns solicitous to retain me — Ridiculous stories told to persuade or frighten me to remain — They ad-

dress me anonymous letters — Nervous condition superinduced by these annoyances — I hear the miraculous bell — The convent in confusion — The nuns declare it to be the bell of Saint Benedetto calling me — I leave the convent — Letters from my sisters at Reggio — They tell me that my mother is about to marry again, and no other home offering to me, I am persuaded to return to the convent — The die cast — The fatal YES! — I am received at the convent with the ringing of bells and the firing of mortaletti — Reflections — Interview with my aunt, the abbess — Final determination to sacrifice myself — Newspaper announcement of the fact — Ceremony of taking the white veil — Protest of the English gentleman against cutting off my hair, ... 172

CHAPTER X.

THE PROFESSION.

The year of the novitiate — Marianna — Her death — Another change of abbess — Theresa — My relatives raise the necessary money to enable me to pay my way into the convent — Death of my sister Josephine — The holy stairs — Silly questions addressed to the candidate — Consequences of not conforming — The time arrives when the final vows must be taken, and I pronounce the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of perpetual seclusion — The ceremony, 196

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHARITY OF THE NUNS.

Charity considered — I demand the office of the infirmary, and am assigned to it — Want of charity of the nuns for an old abbess at her death-bed — Brutality of a conversa — Another instance of the same sort — Indifference of the nuns to the death of one of their own number — Suicide, in the convent, of a young country girl, from cruel treatment — Cruelty to a pet dog — Cruelty to a conversa — A nun attempts to poison one of her servants, ... 213

CHAPTER XII.

THE POVERTY AND HUMILITY OF THE NUNS.

Remark of Herder — "Priestcraft" — What the vows of poverty and humility demand — The making of confetti — The confessors always receive the best; the relatives what remains — Heartlessness of two nun-sisters — Of another who hears the news of the death of her own sister — Jealousy of rank — A Barnabite monk reprehended for preaching home-truths to the daughters of princes, dukes, counts, etc. — Instances of the ignorance of some of the nuns and abbesses, ... 224

CHAPTER XIII.

INSANITY IN THE CONVENT.

Tendency of convent life to insanity — Instances of nuns becoming insane — Horrible case of Angiola Maria — Her death — The case of the conversa Concetta — She precipitates herself over a stairway to the ground — Visit of an inspector of police, and of the cardinal — Death of Concetta, ... 235

CHAPTER XIV.

THEFT IN THE CONVENT.

Numerous instances of stealing in the convent — Sacredness of the objects no exception — How the sisters cheat in confectionery and medicines, . . 266

CHAPTER XV.

THE ACOLYTES.

The young priests patronized by the nuns — Ceremony during Holy Week, in the convent, of washing the disciples' feet, one of the nuns personating the Saviour, and others the disciples — To see this ceremony, four acolytes climb to a posi-

tion where they can observe it, and, at the same time, talk with the nuns! — I am nominated for the office of sacristan — Conspiracy of the nuns to inveigle me with one of the young priests — Its failure as regards me — Its success with the poor acolyte — Final resolve, ... 277

CHAPTER XVI.

CHIARINA (LITTLE CLARA).

Discontent with convent life — Failing health — Appeal through my physician to the pope — Opposition of the canonico — Entrance of Chiarina into the convent — Her great beauty — She is confided to my care — Her delicate health — Her distressing cough — The nuns make fun of her suffering — Ill-treated by her nurse — Her brother takes her from the convent — Circumstances compel her to return — I vote against her readmission — Her sudden death, ... 291

CHAPTER XVII.

CARDINAL RIARIO.

The "head" of the church in Naples — His ignorance and conceit — The "spouses of Christ" are infatuated with him — He presents the nuns with a huge sturgeon, thinking it good to eat — He visits the convent and inquires for me — Demands my reasons for desiring to leave the convent, and declares his opposition — I abandon myself to despair — He repeats his visit, and reasons with me to no purpose — He goes to Rome — I make another appeal to the Holy Father, which fails — The cardinal returns from Rome, bringing me a rosary which has been blessed by the pope, and demands some keepsake from me, in return, of my own working — He is refused — Another time he asks for some confetti of my own manufacture — He is again refused — My letter to the pope falls into the hands of the cardinal, who violates the seal of the confessional, ... 304

CHAPTER XVIII.

1848.

Italy in 1848 — My sympathy with the revolutionary movement — My conversa resolves to follow me — Excitement in Naples — Write to the pope again for permission to live out of the convent — Renewed opposition of the cardinal — The celebrated 15th of May — Barricades thrown up in the streets of Naples — The palazzo Gravina burned — The city declared in a state of siege — The pope finally grants my prayer in part — Consents that I leave the convent and live in a conservatorio — Difficulty in getting admission to one — Succeed finally, and leave San Gregorio for the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli, . . 326

CHAPTER XIX.

CONSERVATORIO DI COSTANTINOPOLI.

History of the establishment — Permission to go out daily in a carriage — The ferocious portress — Nominated canoness of Bavaria — The three parties in the conservatorio — Impertinence of the superior — Scenes with her — She receives a merited castigation and is terribly frightened, and benefits by the lesson she receives — My mother makes a personal application to the pope for my enlargement, and fails — The pope visits Naples — Comes to the convent of San Giovanni, whither we go to see him — I receive a special benediction from him — My poverty — Am obliged to live on black bread — The cardinal refuses to yield — Flight, ... 342

CHAPTER XX.

L'ANNUNZIATA DI CAPUA.

The cardinal astonished — He arranges with the police for my arrest — A dream — Reflections — Begin a letter to the cardinal — Resolve to fly to Capua — My mother accompanies me — Reception by Cardinal Capano — Enter the Annunziata — Horrible moral condition of the institution — The abbess — Dialogue with one of these women — Revelations of another — Her superstition, ... 365

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ARREST.

Sad days in the Annunziata — Cardinal Capano endorses my application to the pope, and recommends my secularization — His sudden death, which is a death-blow to my hopes — Return to Naples — Father Spaccapietra — Some months of truce — My mother goes to Gaeta, and I to live with a married sister — My complicity with the liberal movement — My arrest — Consigned to the Ritiro di Mondragone — My servant not permitted to accompany me — Il Morbili — Filthy condition of the institution — Gallantry of a priest repulsed. 381

CHAPTER XXII.

IL RITIRO DI MONDRAGONE.

A horrible incarceration — Visit of the priora — Writing materials denied me — Prohibited talking to, or seeing any one, whatever, or even to look out of a window — My distress — Am I really sane? — Four days absolutely without food — Doctor Sabini — Examination of my trunks by the priest in charge —

The doctor brings me good news, which proves a better restorative than his medicines, and I take food again — The good doctor had deceived me; his good news was an invention of his own — Write to my mother, enclosing my letter in my dirty clothes, which I send to her to be washed, and receive answers in the same way — Letter to my mother — Determination of the superiors to provide me with a confessor — I finally select one, who is objected to by the authorities, but is finally conceded to me — My mother sees the pope's nuncio, who, on hearing of my case, comes to see me — Conflict with the superiore, who, suspecting the means I had employed, himself examines carefully all my dirty clothes, and finds secreted in a towel a letter to my mother, which I had placed there on purpose to deceive him — Permission finally from the cardinal, at the intercession of the nuncio, is given me to send and receive letters under seal — One further application to the pope — Another denial — Contemplate flight — Dissuaded from it by my confessor, who advises another petition to the pope, which is arranged for — The medical certificate, ... 396

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BRIEF RESPITE.

My aunt departs on her mission to Rome — Alarming illness of my mother — The cardinal refuses to allow me to go to see her on her death-bed — Success of my attempts in Rome — I determine to leave the diocese of Naples for that of Castellamare — The cardinal comes to see me — Interview — Correspondence with the Bishop of Castellamare — The cardinal's last kick! — Leave the ritiro for Castellamare, ... 433

CHAPTER XXIV.

ESPIONAGE.

The air of freedom — The peasant boy and his caged birds — Lay aside the nun's habit, except the veil — Ennuied with this quiet life, determine to return to Naples — Secure rooms — A priest assassinates his brother-in-law for some difference about thirty ducats, and then commits suicide — This occurring in the house where I lived, I feared the police, and moved my quarters — Victor Hugo's description of the Neapolitan police — Spies all around me — 1860 — The beginning of the end, ... 444

CHAPTER XXV.

LIBERTY.

"Italia Una"—The breaking out of the revolution all over Italy—Extracts from a great poem—Francesco II.—Address of a celebrated republican to him—September 7, 1860, in Naples, the day of Garibaldi's public reception—Deposit my veil in the altar of San Gennaro—Make the acquaintance of a gentleman whom I marry, ... 461

MYSTERIES

OF THE

NEAPOLITAN CONVENTS.

CHAPTER I.

INFANCY.

Birth — My father removes to Bari — Singular event — Return to Naples — Straitened circumstances — My father appointed Governor of Reggio — An amusing English sea-captain — Voyage to Messina — Reception at Reggio.

It is from no desire to boast of a distinguished descent, but rather as the duty of narrator, that I state here that one of the first and most conspicuous families of Naples is that of Caracciolo, to which I have the honor to belong.

My father was the second son of Genaro Caracciolo, Prince of Forino, and was born in 1764. He was destined for the career of arms (the fortunes of younger sons, according to the feudal laws in force, being both slender and stinted), and married, in his fortieth year, Teresa Cutelli, a young lady of Palermo, who was scarcely fourteen years of age at the time.

I was born Feb. 17, 1821, being the fourth female

child, and received the baptismal name of Enrichetta (Henrietta), after a paternal aunt, who was a nun, and one of the innumerable offerings which our family had consecrated to the order of San Benedetto. I was born in our family palace at Naples, a few weeks before Italy and Greece, the two cradles of the antique civilization, renewed their struggles for national independence; and was only three years of age when my parents removed to Bari;* my father, who at that time held the rank of marshal, having been appointed governor of that province.

I remember, distinctly, as if it had occurred yesterday, a circumstance which happened to me in that city when I was only about three years old. Our family had been invited to a masked ball, and, wishing to take me with them, dressed me as a little peasant girl. Early in the evening I became, of course, very sleepy, and my mother, wrapping me up in a shawl, committed me into the hands of a servant-man, with instructions to carry me directly home and place me in charge of the nurse.

Meanwhile the dancing went on, the excitement, as usual, increasing all the time and continuing to a late hour without interruption. Scarcely had it concluded,

* Bari, the second city in importance and in population in the continental portion of the ex-kingdom of Naples, is the capital of the province of the same name, on the Adriatic shore. The province is celebrated for the production of olive-oil and almonds; the larger portion of the latter fruit imported into the United States is grown in the province of Bari.

however, when my mother called for the servant to inquire if I had waked up on the way home. He was not at his post, and no one had seen him return. My parents were greatly alarmed, of course, and sent immediately home to inquire what had happened to me and to the servant; but the messenger was told by the nurse that she had seen nothing of me, and this greatly increased their anxiety. My father ran to the house, and demanded over and over again of the nurse, with a palpitating heart, what had become of me. The poor woman could only repeat her reply, that no one had been to the house since we left it.

The agitation and distress of my parents were now overwhelming; and, followed by relatives and friends, they left the ballroom immediately to look for me. Then commenced a search of indescribable confusion and bewilderment, — a continual passing and repassing over the same ground, — all in vain. Finally, it was proposed to change the route, and, having hunted for some hours, they came finally upon a low drinking-house, the door of which stood ajar, the uproar within betokening a debauch. They pushed open the door and found me lying upon two chairs, and immersed in the most profound sleep, whilst the servant had got drunk and was clamorously fighting with his companions. The precipitation with which my mother seized her lost child aroused me. The unusual scene in which I awoke, and the cry of my father, as he seized the drunken servant

by the throat and hurled him to the floor, made an impression on me which I can never forget.

This is the earliest recollection of my life.

After a residence of four years in Bari, my father was suddenly recalled to Naples. The Bourbons were accustomed to make use of this mysterious terrorism for which the name of the Council of Ten became so fearfully celebrated in history.

Without assigning any reason for it, this capricious and unjust government had placed my father on the retired list, and it was not until some time subsequently that he learned that he had been privately accused of disaffection. He repeatedly sought an audience of the king, but Francesco I., who was then on the throne, and not less odious and remorseless than his father, was inexorable. My father then sent to my mother, to notify her to prepare immediately to return to Naples with the family, and directed a friend of his to accompany us on the journey. Promptly getting everything in readiness therefore, we secured our places in the post-carriage, which was then the readiest way to make the transit.

We were on the third day of our journey, when my mother observed that a ghostly pallor covered the face of the friend who accompanied us. She inquired what was the matter. He replied that he felt very ill. After a few moments he put his head out of the carriage-door,

and we were greatly shocked to see him vomit torrents of blood.

In this deplorable condition, and under the apprehension that his hemorrhage might terminate in death at any moment, we were compelled to pursue our way until we might arrive at some place where we could obtain such aid as his case demanded. Useless, however, were all the remedies of the healing art, for the unfortunate man died at sunset.

This catastrophe greatly oppressed our spirits. We continued our journey in sadness, and I, although still a child, was profoundly grieved. Arriving in Naples, we found my father deeply depressed by the wrongs he had received at the hands of the government. We were advised, on all sides, to implore the sovereign justice, and we all went together to throw ourselves at the feet of the king; to no purpose, however, and we were thus placed in a condition but little short of indigence.

The pay of the retired list, to which my father was now reduced, was scarcely sufficient for the most urgent necessities of life, for our numerous family. Three entire years, however, were passed in these straitened circumstances, — three long years of poverty, until finally, reinstated in his proper class, he received the appointment of Governor of Reggio, a province in Calabria.

We secured our passage to Messina in an English brig, and were dismayed one day, on receiving notice

from the captain that we must embark immediately, although a furious gale, accompanied with fearful thunder and lightning, seemed to threaten annihilation to every vessel in port. The remonstrances of my parents availed nothing with the determined captain, and we were therefore obliged to go on board while the rain was falling in torrents and the waves on all sides were infuriated.

The determination of the captain to weigh anchor during such a furious storm seemed to my parents very singular, and, in saying as much to him, the captain pointed out to my father on a chart the route of the several voyages he was still obliged to make, without fail, in order to be in London on the first of January, to meet a young girl whom he tenderly loved, and who would expect him on that day to celebrate their wedding; and, he added, that if all the elements should combine to break loose at the same time against his vessel, it should not interrupt his plans; death alone would prevent his marrying the woman he loved on the evening of the New Year.

At this chivalrous explanation the expression on my father's face was changed. He laughed, for it seemed strange to him that an Anglo-Saxon should speak with so much warmth of his love. He still could not help being provoked at finding the unreasonable sailor intent, from such a caprice, on challenging the elements. But there was no remedy; our luggage was already on board,

and, willing or not willing, we were compelled to obey the captain's orders.

I was not yet seven years of age, but from the signs which my father and mother exchanged, I distinctly understood that they were exceedingly terrified at the storm which was raging. The wind was increasing fearfully, accompanied by lightning, thunder, and hail. I began to cry in chorus with my sisters, and neither the caresses of our parents, nor the proffered consolations of the captain, were able to pacify us. The latter tried to induce us to believe, I know not by what kind of mixture of heterogeneous phrases, that we were not running any danger whatever.

We had no sooner got out of the bay than we shipped a tremendous sea, which threw our vessel completely on her beam-ends. Our trunks, which were numerous and piled one upon the other, under cover, were upset with a horrid crash, and rolled over to the lee side of the vessel. It was a critical moment, and, but for the rapid movements of the crew in collecting and securing the trunks and boxes to iron rings, the ship would inevitably have been unable to right herself.

Our voyage fortunately was a short one. The evening of the second day we arrived at Messina. For many hours after, our heads were swimming, and it was only after a prolonged sleep that we felt ourselves restored to the normal condition.

The following morning another vessel arrived at Mes-

sina from Naples. Encouraged by seeing our brig make sail, their captain had followed us; but, less fortunate than we, they had been obliged to throw a large part of their cargo overboard, and they brought besides, the dead body of a woman who had died from fright and sea-sickness combined. At this news, we thanked God who had brought us safely through such great dangers, and waited for favorable weather to cross over the strait to Reggio.

Three days subsequently the sun rose in the usual splendor of a Sicilian sky, and the sea, perfectly calm, promised us a prosperous voyage. We arrived at Reggio in a few hours, and were most cordially welcomed by a great crowd of citizens who were on the shore waiting for us. Four carriages were filled by our family, and we were taken to the palace destined for our residence.

The agreeableness of the place, the cheerfulness of the people, and Calabrian hospitality, soon made us forget our sufferings of the three preceding years, as well as the howlings of the tempest from which we had just escaped.

So easy is it to dissipate the traces which misfortune makes upon us in the days of our childhood!

Little did I foresee at this time the woes and tempests which awaited me in after life!

CHAPTER II.

EARLY LOVES.

Carlo —— — My unhappy passion for him — Disappointment and distress at his marrying another — Visit of King Ferdinand to Reggio — Accident to my sister Josephine — Alarming illness of my sister and myself — Domenico.

Eight years of early life passed by, without the occurrence of anything sufficiently important to be worthy of record. The amusements of childhood and the ordinary studies of that age occupied the day, and in the evening there was usually assembled at our house a select circle of the officers, civil and military, of the district, as well as of the Calabrians, among whom there were, at the time, several literary celebrities.

In the course of these eight years my three elder sisters had married. But one remained at home, older than myself by one year, — Josephine, beautiful, but unfortunate girl! She had the form and the heart of an angel! . . . . She is now no more! Delicate and variable to this point had been my own health. Possessing a nervous temperament, always pallid, and endowed with a superabundant and baleful sensibility, I gave but little promise of ever arriving at the proportions of a healthy and strong constitution. Entering as

I was now upon my fourteenth year, my constitution seemed to undergo a very favorable change; my form took an unexpected development; to pallor succeeded vermilion, which seemed more striking than it really was, because of the brown color on my cheeks.

Unfortunately, with the precocious unfolding of the body, came that also of the heart. The imperturbable serenity of childhood soon disappeared, and with it the comforting balsam of sound sleep. I felt a void in my mind, — a void extremely painful, — which I desired to fill by the attainment of some faintly perceived and indeterminate object, not even in my own mind distinctly defined. A look, or a word, from a young man, was sufficient to disturb the regular pulsations of my heart, and to make me believe that I had inspired a sentiment in another, similar to that which I experienced myself. Then would come the disenchantment. That look had only been thrown upon me accidentally; that word only pronounced from politeness, the heart having had no part in it.

The training which our mother gave us was rigorous in the extreme. She measured the time which it was customary for us to enjoy on the terrace, during the hour in the afternoon which is devoted all over Italy to the *passeggio* (promenade); and the slightest transgression of her rules was punished with severe castigation.

But who does not know how rebellious to discipline are the aspirations of a heart at fourteen years of age?

"....Ben sa il ver chi l'impara
Com' ho fatt' io con mio grave dolore!"*

The last of my joyous days expired on that very balcony.

Among the crowd of admirers who passed in front of our house, I distinguished a prepossessing young man, more intent than any one else in paying me the tribute of his admiration. To return his gaze, to blush and feel my heart beat in an unusual manner, were the consequences. Often during the same day he passed and repassed. The languid softness of his eye, his easy carriage; his stature, tall rather than otherwise; and the litheness of his proportions convinced me that he, and no other, was the man who had beautified my dreams; who had become the incarnation of my aspirations, and I flattered myself that I was the "loadstar" to his gaze.

As he was moving away, one day, I summoned my servant, who was a native of Reggio, and inquired if she knew his person or his name, and she replied that she knew him very well.

His name was Carlo ——, and he was the eldest son in a family not rich, but in easy circumstances.

The image of this handsome young man was ever in my mind, invested with ideal forms. The hours of the night seemed to me eternal, and the following day equally endless; work was tiresome, and lessons an-

* Well knows he the truth who learns it, as I have learned it with grievous pain.

noying. I waited with the utmost anxiety for the hour to arrive in which permission would be given us to go out upon the favorite terrace again, to see the object which, since the preceding day, had occupied my thoughts.

The hour finally arrived. I ran to the balcony, and inexpressible was my satisfaction to see him at his accustomed post. Our eyes met, and my face was covered with blushes. Carlo perceived my embarassment; a slight smile played upon his lips, and, modestly lifting his hat, he saluted me. What temerity on my part! I returned his salute, all trembling and confused, and by that act I seemed to pass at once from the impersonality of childhood to the consciousness of a more expansive individuality.

From that moment I had no more peace of mind. The sufferances of love, especially the first, are enchanting; a single moment of happiness compensates for a thousand griefs. How many sweet comforts have I not drawn from the melancholy strains of Petrarch, which, in those days, in the silence of the night, I used to devour with avidity! With what sweet inspirations did not the overflowing tenderness of "Jerusalem Delivered," temper the acerbities of my sufferings!

Carlo continued to pass before our house every day. A few moments' delay in the time of his arrival, or the sudden coming of a rain-storm, or my necessary absence from my own post, were sources of great afflic-

tion to me. To see him, and to be able to return his graceful salute; to exchange, if it were only a single glance, not only made me forget all my former sufferings, but filled me with ineffable felicity.

In this manner several months passed, during which time our communications never went beyond the limits of looks and reciprocal salutes. I loved that young man with a pure and devoted love, which I felt to be diffused through my whole being, although I was not able, nor did I know how to express it. He seemed always anxious to see me, though not so solicitous, apparently, as to send a matrimonial embassy to my parents, and he appeared rather disposed to hide from them our innocent but, so far as I was concerned, sincere attachment.

Opposite to our house there was a palace, the second floor of which had, for a long time, been unoccupied. One morning I heard a cart stop there, and, raising the curtain, I saw porters carrying furniture into these apartments. I returned later to the window, animated, I know not by what flattering presentiment; and — oh, what a surprise! — I saw Carlo on the balcony of that house, looking over at me.

"Can it be, then," I thought, "that he has left his own family to be nearer to me?" I presented myself at the window, and Carlo saw me, smiled, and saluted me. I fled for fear my mother would come in; but happiness manifested itself in all my actions, and appeared to me to be in the atmosphere I breathed. After dinner, ac-

cording to custom, I seated myself at the balcony again. Carlo was on his, also. He soon retired into the interior of the room, and, by expressive gestures, demanded if I loved him. Gazing upon him, smiling and lowering my head, I gave him to understand that I did.

The evening of the same day there was a large number of friends assembled in our parlors, and several young people, who were sitting near me, began to talk of a person whose name had now become very dear to me. I listened attentively. They said that he had taken a house away from his family, in order to live apart from them with his bride. The word *bride* surprised me; and, notwithstanding I used every exertion to learn something further, I could gather nothing more about him from their discourse.

My affection for him increased from seeing him so often. I ran to the window frequently, careful always to avoid the vigilance of my mother, and was very much excited with the hope that the bride, of whom I had heard speak, was to be no other than myself.

On Sunday my mother went out early. I opened the window as usual, and, seating myself before it, looked at Carlo, who, to my eyes, appeared more attractive than usual. He, too, seated near his window, made signs to me which seemed to show the most ardent affection. While contemplating him, and filled with the delicious flattery that Heaven had not created him for

any other woman than myself, how many, and what projects of future happiness did I not frame!

In the heart of the young girl, in her earliest love, is there a day more ardently sighed for than the day of her nuptials?

At this moment the servant entered in great haste, and said to me: —

"Signorina, what are you doing? Go away from that window."

"Why?" I asked.

"You are silly to fall in love with this wild youth. He is to be married in a few days to another."

"You must be mistaken," I cried, my face covered with a mortal pallor. "You must be mistaken. Who has made you believe this story?"

And, turning round to him, I asked him by gestures if he loved me; and he replied, apparently in transports, and repeatedly, "Yes."

"See!" I exclaimed. "See how you have been deceived!"

"No, I am not deceived. You are too young yet to comprehend the wickedness and the dissimulation of men. It is just as certain that, in less than a month, that hypocrite will marry another woman, as it is that to-day is Sunday. My mother has spoken with him on the subject. She said to him, 'I thought, Signor Carlo, that your bride was to be the young Caracciolo?' And

he replied, 'The Caracciolo is very pretty, but she has very little dower.'"

At this I burst into tears. With my handkerchief to my face, I turned to him an interrogative look, full of consternation and of sadness. By signs he inquired what was the matter with me; but his conscience, which must already have begun to upbraid him, soon revealed the truth.

"Go to your own room, signorina," said the chambermaid to me again; "it does not become you to look at that perfidious youth again."

Without replying to her, I closed the ill-fated window and retired. My heart seemed to be breaking. The chambermaid offered me assistance, and I gave myself up, finally, a prey to desperation, and shed a torrent of bitter tears.

"Cruel man!" I exclaimed, sighing; "was it not enough for you to deceive and then to abandon me; but have you the barbarity, as well, to select for your residence a home directly opposite to mine, in order that I shall see the woman, who has supplanted me in your affections, by your side every day?"

Between frenzy and tears, not a few hours passed away. Finally, I endeavored to calm myself so as not to attract my mother's attention on her return home. But she, perceiving from my altered looks and swollen eyelids that something unusual was the matter with me, inquired what had affected me to such a degree.

"A terrible headache," I replied.

This was literally true. The pain I suffered was such as to make me sick. In fact, after three lonely days, during which I experienced the most bitter suffering, and avoided seeing, or showing myself to Carlo, I was seized with a gastric bilious fever, which confined me to my bed for several weeks.

The fever did not prevent me, however, from sending the servant to the fatal window, from time to time, to see what Carlo was doing. She reported that his windows were closed. I besought her to inform herself, from some one of her acquaintance, if the preparations for the wedding were progressing, for my love, not less ardent than at first, allowed me to hope that the news of my illness might restrain the monster from consummating the contract. The answer that I received was, that he now spent the entire day in the house of his affianced, and that in one short week they were to be married.

This news was the last ounce which broke the camel's back, and it hurried my desperation to a climax. I cried all night, as all young girls are accustomed to cry, who acquire their first experience of the world through deceit.

Lives there a woman who has never loved? Such an one, were all Plato's philosophy to be infused into her mind, would never know either herself or the world.

The following morning my spirits revived. Upon

the grave of my early love I laid, with my own hands, the tombstone, and engraved on it the word "oblivion." May all young girls be enabled to imitate my example, or rather may a healthy education preserve them from the folly of beholding in every lover a future spouse!

The image of Carlo returned no more to my mind, except under the semblance of a dramatic personation, whose vicissitudes had affected me at the theatre.

I became finally convalescent. One night, very late, I heard the noise of carriage-wheels, which seemed to stop at no great distance from our home.

"Antonina! Antonina!" I cried, to the servant. "What noise is that in the street? It is the bridal party, perhaps."

"Yes, signorina, it is the bride who has arrived at her house, in company with Signor Carlo and their relatives."

It was like an electric shock to me.

"And the wedding, — when did it take place?"

"This very evening."

I laid my head anew upon the pillow, and was silent. I was already resigned.

Several months after the facts above narrated took place, the city was thrown into a great commotion by the announcement that King Ferdinand was about to visit Reggio, on his return from Palermo.

My father was notified, one morning at daylight, of

the approach of the steamer, on board which was the royal party. Dressing himself hurriedly he went at once to the place appointed for the reception, attended by the principal officials and civilians of the province.

In the evening, a splendid ball was given to the king in the palazzo Ramirez.

My sister Josephine and myself attended the ball. We were dressed simply, but elegantly, in a cherry-colored crape, over an under-dress of the same color. Our dresses were cut decently low in the neck, and we wore golden ornaments. Our hair was dressed in ringlets, *à l'Anglaise*.

We had been perhaps half an hour in the ballroom when the king arrived. My father, who was on the reception committee, presented us to his majesty. Before selecting his partner for the dance, the king expressed the wish to look around the room a few moments.

"Those two young ladies *en cerise*, are they your daughters, marshal?" demanded the husband of the virtuous Christina, of my father.

"Majesty, they are."

"I congratulate you; they dance beautifully."

The waltz being concluded, he was solicited to select a partner for the quadrille. I saw him direct his looks towards me, and inviting me for himself, he pointed out my sister Josephine to minister Delcaretto, to form a *vis-à-vis*.

If Ferdinand II. had known how to govern his people

and to treat them with that chivalrous amiability which he knew how to display in the ballroom, who can say how much longer Italy might have been obliged to wait the day of regeneration?

Immediately after the ball he left the city.

Politics was for me, at that time, as well as for most others, an uninteresting subject. It was never safe during the Bourbon dynasty to talk politics, because of the spies who surrounded one on every side; they were never seen, nor could it be discovered who they were, yet every word that was uttered was duly reported to the government. For these reasons it was a subject universally tabooed.

I remember nothing else of any particular importance till the year 1838, except two circumstances which occurred in our little family, which I am permitted to record.

There was in the palace in which we lived a small chapel, with a grating which opened into the church of St. Augustine; we heard mass and recited our prayers there. One day, as Josephine was passing through it, a portion of the floor fell, and she fell with it. The poor creature was picked up senseless. At the moment, she was thought to have received only a slight injury, but she was made lame by it, and from its effects ultimately died.

Another time, on going to the room of my father to wish him a "good-morning," as was our custom, I took his hand and kissed it reverently. He raised my head, and, looking earnestly at me, inquired if I was ill.

"Not at all," I replied.

"How, not at all? you are certainly not well."

"My God! what do you see? it is very strange: I certainly feel quite well."

I went to the looking-glass and there I saw that my face was covered with spots of a lively reddish color. He made me sit down by his side, and calling my mother's attention to it, she sent at once for the physician. But what was our surprise, a moment later, to see Josephine come into the room with her face looking rather worse than mine.

It was thought to be the effect of a pill of belladonna, which had been administered to us in a drastic dose, for a convulsive cough, and had poisoned us.

The physician was delayed in responding to our call; meanwhile our condition was becoming every moment more critical. The flush which had at first appeared only on our faces was fast spreading over our whole bodies; a violent palpitation of the heart succeeded, and our eyesight became partially obscured.

The doctor arrived, however, at last, after our waiting an hour in the greatest anxiety, and, by administering lemon-juice with a great deal of ice, he arrested the progress of the poison.

It was now the month of October. After the tempest of grief which I had suffered from the deception of Carlo, my heart enjoyed a perfect calm. I saw him by the side of his wife, with the utmost indifference, and she, either for effect, or from studied malignity, showered upon him the most ardent caresses every time I happened to be looking towards them.

In the mean time, three other children had been born into our family, and the care which I was obliged to take of them served me for the most agreeable diversion.

One evening, my father received the visit of a new civil employé, who brought his son with him, who seemed scarcely yet to have completed his twentieth year. I spent the evening in the saloon with the rest of the family.

The young man's name was Domenico. He kept his eyes fixed on me constantly during the entire visit. Although he could not be said to be handsome, yet his eyes were brilliant, sparkling, and fascinating.

Was he conscious of this power that he kept them fixed upon me so closely?

This much I know, that, under the influence of this fascination, a restlessness, a singular disturbance, got possession of me, which continued to grow upon me. I tried to change my position, to converse, to wander about, but in vain; that inexorable look pursued me to

every new place; it attracted me irresistibly; it magnetized me.

The following day I saw him on the public walk, and again at the theatre in the evening. Thenceforward I could not go out of the house without meeting him; my eye detected him in a crowd with marvellous quickness, and, at the sight of him, my heart always beat violently. He, on his part, anxious to follow wherever I went, allowed no opportunity to escape of making me acquainted with the sentiment with which I had inspired him.

"Must I believe that the men are all like Carlo?" whispered a voice within me, in insinuating tones. "No, they are not all of that pattern. If the maxim be true, that 'rare is loyalty in love, and few are they who find it,' certainly the existence of virtue is demonstrated in your own sincerity, and you have only to make a second attempt, to find it. Cannot a single look, directed by the honest and virtuous motives of one who is sincere, be a messenger of love, of compassion, of humanity?"

Excited again by the imagination, my heart became newly inflamed, while reason, subjugated by sentiment, was silent, and, stripped of every defence, left the mind a prey to the fascinations to which it was exposed.

CHAPTER III.

JEALOUSY.

The three F's — Domenico very attentive — His grandfather demands my hand in marriage, from my parents, for his grandson — They are offended, and Domenico is prohibited from visiting our house — His terrible jealousy — My mother's anger — Domenico more jealous than ever, and my mother more determined — Description of the grand festa of the Assumption at Messina — Rupture of the relations existing between Domenico and myself — Peace.

Alluding to the traditional system of depravation with which the now fallen tyrants of our peninsula denaturalized the customs of their subjects, the most acute and most subtle of German critics, recently deceased, has said that Rossini was the only statesman of Italy.

Heine thus defines the instincts of the Latin race, with a profundity which he failed to employ in the examination of the German character. He lived in Naples, and studied in its vicinity the universal predominance of *melomania* among the Neapolitans.

It was said, too, that with three F's, a prince, a pupil of Machiavelli, might govern, *comme il faut*, the people of meridional Italy. *Festa* (holiday), *Farina* (flour), and *Forca* (the gibbet); the first, to favor the nobles; the second, the lazzaroni; and the third, for the *moustached*

liberals. Of farina, there was sometimes a scarcity; but with the festa and the gibbet they diverted the Neapolitans without stint.

The festa, the primordial and essential element of the Bourbon system of government, is divided into two kinds: the religious festa, and the political, or profane, festa. The former are numerous, and established by precepts of the church; on these days, mechanics and laboring men are prohibited from work, a mass is said in the morning, and then there is a procession of priests and acolytes, with military and a band of music, which passes through the principal streets of the city, finishing in the square, about noon, with the discharge of a sort of *feu-de-joie* and fireworks. The afternoon is devoted to amusements and wine-drinking. The usual political festa differs from the above only by the absence of the priests and their procession. [The National Festa of Italy, which occurs on the first Sunday in June, is but a repetition of the American Fourth of July.]

Under the old Bourbon government there were gala days on which, if the prince danced in his palace, every faithful subject, unless he were a reverend, or gouty, was obliged to put his legs in motion. In the last days of the carnival, when His Majesty, having donned his mask and costume, mounted his gilt car and scattered, with a profuse hand, to the right and to the left, along the Toledo, under the form of confectionery, the riches of his royal munificence, it was deemed an honor for

every devoted and loyal subject to receive in his face at least one discharge of that grape shot, in commemoration of that bombardment which saved Naples the throne and the altar from the pest of liberalism! and *bon ton*, in the provinces, consisted in servilely imitating the depravation of the metropolis.

The Calabrian youth, naturally lively, but infected, also, with the fatuity which varnished over the iron rule of the government, were now entirely occupied with the preparation of their costumes for the great carnival season of 1839.

Domenico did not fail to come to our house every evening, where we had, at this season, music and dancing. Is it possible to listen to the mass without the organ, or to assemble at the evening party without the intervention of the piano-forte?

My mother knew of the attentions which this young man was showing me, and she reproved me sharply for having countenanced them. On that account, I could not raise my eyes to look at him without first being well assured that her attention was otherwise occupied. I was thus compelled to do that which I knew to be contraband, and it weighed heavily on my conscience; but I was unable to see any means of escape.

Domenico abstained from approaching me openly, and also from selecting me for a partner in the dance. This mask of delicacy was the source of much sadness to him, which seemed to me an index of the sincerity of

the affection which he had for me, and, what was more, he had never breathed to me a word of love, as was the common custom. But I have already observed, as the result of my experience, that love, expressed by gestures, is not always either veracious or stable.

The last evening of the carnival there were so many persons assembled in our rooms who were masked, as is the custom at this season, that we were compelled to open other rooms to accommodate them. During the evening a domino approached me, and, handing me some confectionery, something, I knew not what at the moment, fell into my lap. I picked it up. It was under an envelope. I was careful to conceal it in my handkerchief, and, as soon as an opportunity occurred, I went to my own room, where I opened it, as one may readily believe, with my thoughts fixed on Domenico. There were enclosed a large sugar heart, and a little billet, which read as follows: —

"I love thee, dear Enrichetta, — I love thee! Promise me only fidelity, and I swear that thou shalt be mine!

"Domenico."

Hiding the note in my palpitating bosom, and proud of the inappreciable treasure, I returned to the ball-room, feeling quite sure that, among the crowd present, there was not a happier woman than I.

I found him again at one of the doors, where he was

feigning to arrange his mask. My mother, who had not recognized him under that disguise, had no apparent reason to be suspicious.

I stopped on the threshold of the door, and, bending his knee to the floor, and seizing my hand, he imprinted an ardent kiss upon it. Either from emotion, or from the fear of being surprised, we were both speechless. He released me, and I fled.

A few days subsequently, his grandfather presented himself to my parents and demanded my hand in marriage for his grandson. They inquired why the father of Domenico had not come himself, to prefer this request, as was customary; and the grandfather frankly told them that Domenico's father was not satisfied with the match, having intended to give his son another wife; but that he, the grandfather, moved by the entreaties of the grandson, who was his heir, also, had determined to take this step himself, in the hope that his son would finally give his consent also.

The equivocal conclusion, united to the strong antipathy which my mother entertained for Domenico, induced them to say, in reply to the grandfather, that, without the approbation of the young man's father, they would never give their consent; and if, hereafter, Domenico should approach their daughter, on this subject, she would be confined to her own room.

Neither my father nor my mother made me acquainted with the fact of this meeting, nor with the nature of the

business discussed there. I knew it, however, through one of Domenico's friends.

In the evening he was, of course, very sad, and, for fear of being entirely excluded from our house, he used all his efforts to avoid noticing me. As time went on, his sadness increased, until, finally, his father, in order to divert him from the passion which was consuming him, determined to send him to Naples.

Domenico was alarmed at this disagreeable announcement, and burst into tears. He supplicated and implored his father to revoke the fatal order, and used all other means which love could suggest. But his father remained inexorable, so that, after the youth had exhausted the most affectionate prayers, he rose and retired to his own room, where, for two days, he absolutely refused to come out of it, and declined all food, until he had the assurance of his mother, that he should be permitted to remain in Reggio.

It was at this time only that I saw him again. But how pale and wan he had become! Love, however, is said to feed on grief, takes pleasure in affliction, and is comforted at the sight of tears. I thanked him for the patience with which he had suffered for love of me, with a sad smile; and he, in a similar manner, replied to me, and thus we buried our troubles in oblivion.

"Pieni dell' ineffabile dolcezza
D'un comune pensier ch' altri non scerse."*

*Full of the ineffable sweetness of a common thought, which others could not see.

For some time past, I had had occasion to observe that Domenico was of a very jealous disposition. If any young man happened to sit near me for a single moment, or in a low tone of voice addressed me a single innocent word, his face would change color and his eyes would pass instantly from their ordinary expression to one wonderfully ferocious, while the motion of his lips would indicate a reproof. This disposition of his was a source of torture to me, from the impossibility of communicating with him, it being almost impossible for me to receive a letter from him without being detected; and more difficult still, on account of the surveillance of my mother, for me to find an opportunity to answer one. In one of these ill-fated days of his paroxysms of melancholy, only too frequent in the Calabrian character, Domenico took his hat and left our house, and did not show himself again for many days.

Reproved by his friends and confidants for the baseness of his suspicions, he returned to announce to me that he had become convinced of his fault; he seated himself upon a chair, upon one of the rounds of which I had already placed my feet, and commenced a familiar conversation, certain that the presence of my mother would save him from the accusation of attempting to show any particular attention to me.

But she was only seeking a pretext to separate us, and it seemed a sufficient cause to her, that I should have in some way disobeyed her orders. After the com-

pany had all gone away, she ordered me to follow her to her own room, after a few minutes.

When I arrived there I found her in bed. Long and bitter were her exhortations. She thought me intractable, because I persisted in loving a man whom neither she nor my father was willing that I should ever marry. She said that she had perceived that he was of a very jealous disposition, and that his jealousy was the occasion of great unhappiness to me; and she concluded by saying, that it was time now to discontinue it, for both she and my father had become tired of it. His having sat down by my side, notwithstanding her prohibition, presented a propitious occasion to cut short, definitively, the further progress of this foolish love; and to make sure of this, I received orders not to make my appearance again in the saloon of an evening, but to confine myself to my own room.

I was not ignorant of the firmness of my mother's resolution. I retired from her room trembling, and hurried to Josephine, who was waiting for me, impatient to know the issue of the maternal lecture. This dear sister was my consolatory angel. She made me seat myself, for she perceived that it was only with difficulty that I was able to support myself upon my feet, and then questioned me; but I was unable to answer. I hastened to undress myself, assisted by the servant, and went to bed, into which I had no sooner entered than I was seized with one of those nervous attacks to which

I have always been subject, and which have so frequently nearly cost me my life.

They used smelling-salts and other odors to relieve me. My bosom was panting, my throat parched, and a very strong chill made me shake violently on the bed. After an hour or so, tears came to my relief and made their way in copious quantities down my cheeks.

My father, who was naturally endowed with an incomparable gentleness, had abandoned to his wife, entirely, the government of his daughters, and never, in any respect, opposed her, believing her entirely qualified for the duty. He knew, of course, what had occurred, and approved of the sentence which excluded Domenico from our society, while the latter, ignorant of it all, omitted no opportunity of coming to our house in the evening as usual. He noticed my absence, but at first supposed that some household cares prevented me from appearing in the parlor. Meanwhile time ran on, and seeing me no more, he began to suspect the reason and was much distressed.

He first approached my father, who, being incapable of using any one uncivilly, treated him as usual. He then paid his respects to my mother, but was chilled by her severity towards him, which he had not noticed when he first entered the room. He then waited anxiously for an opportunity to speak to Josephine, who at that moment was engaged in conversation with some of her own particular friends.

"Is Signorina Enrichetta ill?" he inquired, when he got an opportunity to gain her ear.

"Yes," she replied, for she saw mother watching her.

"But only yesterday she was quite well?"

Josephine was silent. After a long pause, Domenico added: —

"This change of manner towards me on the part of your mother is very strange. Tell me, signorina, I ask you as a favor, does your sister's illness proceed from her sitting a few minutes beside me yesterday evening?"

"I believe so."

"Good God! It seems to me your mother must have wanted an excuse to separate us. Our conversation was certainly very innocent, and, besides, was all held in her presence. I know not to what else to attribute the singularity of her conduct towards me."

The young man sighed, and continued: —

"Well. I will not come here any more. Your mother's commands shall be obeyed. Pray, however, assure your sister that nothing shall change my affection for her."

He then arose, and, without taking leave of any one, or even looking at anybody, took up his hat and left the room.

Fatal evening of my life! The remembrance of it will never be obliterated from my mind!

Separation only served to irritate more and more the

furious jealousy of Domenico. Through his friend, he assured me that if I wished to give him a proof of my love for him, I must absolutely abstain from dancing with any one.

Nothing could be more conformable to my own wishes, and I gave the required pledge.

One evening I was seated at the piano playing for the others to dance a quadrille. My mother approached me and demanded, angrily: —

"Why do you refuse to dance?"

"I do not feel well."

"What do you wish me to understand, my child? Here I am not to be deceived; it must be because of some silly prohibition of your lover."

"I assure you that —"

"Enough. I will not permit such caprices. . . . Get up and dance the next set."

I was obliged of course to obey; but I went through the quadrille in a state not far short of delirium.

My mother's severities did not end here. Knowing that Domenico was lurking about the house to watch the steps of those who visited us, and to ascertain if among them there might not be, perhaps, some rival, I was directed not to go near any window, except those in the rear of the house, which did not open on any street.

If the imposition of such restrictions had for its effect to foment, even to a state of frenzy, the naturally captious humor and passion of that gloomy youth, I, on my

part, found myself in one of those cruel alternatives from which it was next to impossible to escape serious difficulty.

In connection with this subject, there happened at this time an event, which I ought not to pass over in silence.

Messina — a beautiful city, situated as every one knows on the island of Sicily, nearly opposite to Reggio, and only a few miles distant, from which it is separated only by that strait, which in a storm will make the face of the most experienced pilot turn pale — is accustomed to celebrate, with solemn pomp, the festa in honor of the assumption of the Virgin, for four successive days, beginning on the 12th and terminating on the 15th of August.

This celebration is a singular mixture of the sacred and the profane; of Christianity and idolatry; of European and of savage customs. It always attracts many people from all the neighboring places as well as from the Calabrian provinces.

Two enormous figures of horses, made of pasteboard, on which are two giants, made of the same material, are placed in the piazza of the *arcivescovado*. Two men of the common people are then covered with a camel's skin, in such a way as to represent that animal to a certain extent; this skin is called by the Messinese *blessed* (I don't know why), and this supposed animal then goes around among the store-keepers of the city soliciting

goods to pay the expenses of the festa. Into the open mouth of the begging quadruped these contributions are thrown and the goods are subsequently converted into money.

The most imposing part of the solemnity consists in the procession, which passes through the principal streets of the city and is preceded by an enormous bara (car) drawn by a long team of buffaloes, on which is erected a series of wheels, horizontally arranged, one above the other, — large at the bottom and diminishing in size as they ascend, — which are put in rotatory motion, and on them are placed figures made to symbolize the heavenly bodies, as the sun, the moon, and the stars.

Beautifully and sumptuously adorned is this machine, built and put in motion in honor of Her who gave birth to the God of charity! But in reality, it reminds one rather of the furious car of Juggernaut, or the execrable hecatombs of the Druids; and at the sight of it, with its living, innocent victims, immolated on its bosom, one's heart is shocked and it is impossible to abstain from crying out against such barbarities.

On the extreme rays of the sun and the moon, and on the extreme rims of the wheels, suckling infants are bound, whose unnatural mothers are induced in this vile way to gain a few ducats, which are paid them, for the use of their babies, by the impresario of the spectacle; the children are designed to symbolize the angels who accompany the Virgin on her way to heaven. These

innocent little creatures — not otherwise culpable, save for being born of such inhuman mothers, and for having unfortunately come into the world in a country not yet sufficiently civilized — are taken down from the fatal wheel at the conclusion of the parade, many of them either dead or dying, after having been kept revolving in the air for seven long hours!

At the termination of the festa, more properly of the *sacrifice*, the mothers come running in crowds and howling and crowding each other, this one beating that, and all impatient to learn, from actual examination, whether their own children are alive or dead.

Then begins a scene of a different kind, which is sometimes only concluded by an effusion of blood. It not being easy for a mother to recognize her own child among the survivors, the one disputes with the other for the fruits of her own womb; while the imprecations of the disputants and the lamentations of the most agonized are mixed up with the deafening derisions of the spectators, and the hissing of the mob. Those of them who happen to belong to the church return to their own homes deprived of their children, and console themselves, under the instructions of their priests, with the thought that the Virgin, fascinated with these prepossessing little angels, has taken them with her to Paradise. Convinced of this, they regale themselves on their ill-gotten gains, feasting with their feminine friends until the money received from the impresario for the

lives of their children, is entirely squandered; not doubting but what they will obtain from the priest further succor in memory of their little angels who have so gloriously found their way into heaven.

[We take the following description from the Messina correspondent of an Italian journal, published in August, 1865:—

"The 15th August passed away and Messina has not had this year, a single ceremony with which the population is accustomed to solemnize the festival of the Virgin. The sanitary authorities have forbidden all extraordinary gatherings of the people, therefore the camel, the promenade of the giants, and even the *Bara* must be postponed to some more fortunate year. But what is the *Bara?*

"It is a sledge on which is a circular platform, and in its centre a tomb with the mortal remains of the Virgin, surrounded by all the apostles, prophets, many priests, and angels. There is a cloud with vaporous globes kept in motion by an engine, which serves as a pavilion over it; on the cloud there is a globe representing the world, with the sun at the right-hand side, the moon on the left, and a smaller cloud above it. Christ is standing on this cloud, holding in his right hand the soul of the Virgin flying to heaven. All this summed up gives a colossus fifteen metres high. Everything is in motion in this holy machinery; the apostles revolve around the dead

Virgin; so do the prophets, the angels, the sun, the moon, the cloud, the whole world; and, above all, what turns quicker than anything else are the brains of the inhabitants, so enthusiastic at the strange spectacle. The angels are represented by nearly a hundred babies. Christ is represented by a young man; the soul of the Virgin by a fair girl dressed in white, and sending blessings to the people from that height. An immense quantity of iron is necessary to keep together all the moving pyramid, and to keep safely so many persons and babies placed in such difficult positions. This whole apparatus passes through the main street of Messina without any difficulty, drawn by thousands of arms, as everybody puts his hand to the ropes attached to the *Bara*."]

The time for this celebration, I said, was approaching; a manifestation of one of the aforesaid Bourbon F's. A large party of our friends agreed, together with my father and mother, to pay Messina a visit. In all, we numbered forty persons, and one large house was secured there sufficient to accommodate us all.

I was very much distressed, imagining the anger which the announcement of such an amusement would occasion to Domenico; for into our party several young men had insinuated themselves, of whom he felt a very unjust, but harassing, jealousy. There was one among them who, ignorant of the relations which subsisted between

us, had confided to Domenico, himself, the secret of his own preference for me. As soon as Domenico learned of this project, he abandoned himself to the most absurd frenzy, and, by his usual messenger, caused me to understand that, if I should go to Messina, he would commit suicide. In vain his friend Paul told him that he was exacting from me that which I was unable to comply with; it not being presumable that my parents would go to Messina and leave me at home, nor would I, besides, be expected to struggle against their commands. He finally succeeded in persuading him by these and other arguments, promising him besides, that he would stay by my side during the whole time, and that he would give me his arm in our walks, so that no one else should have a chance to approach me; and, further, he swore to him, in the name of the friendship which bound them, frankly and sincerely, that at his return, he would give him an account of my conduct towards all his imaginary rivals.

Reassured by these promises of his friend, he preceded us by several hours in the passage, so that, on our arrival in Messina, I saw him standing on the Molo waiting for us. He followed us at a distance, and finding out where we lodged, installed himself in a café from which, without being seen by my mother, he could see the balconies of our house.

Paul maintained his promise faithfully; he stationed himself by my side and followed me like my shadow,

making of his body an insurmountable barrier between me and any person who might attempt to approach me.

I was much in hopes that the whole affair would pass over without any unpleasant occurrence. Unfortunately it did not.

It was nine o'clock one evening when Paul told me that he must go out for a few minutes to procure something of which he was much in need.

"Be quick, Paul, for mercy's sake," I said to him; "you know that at ten o'clock we must go with our party to the Exchange."

"Yes," he replied; "but there is an hour yet, and I only ask a few moments."

Saying this he departed.

He had had hardly time to get into the street when my mother ordered Josephine and myself to make ourselves ready to go out.

"But how shall we do?" I asked, "since at ten o'clock we have to go to the Exchange, by appointment?"

"We are going around the streets a little first to see the illumination."

"We are not all here," I added; "we miss yet some of our party."

"Those who are not here now, can join us," she replied, in a tone which admitted of no dispute.

I was silenced, and slowly as possible I made the necessary preparations, with the hope that Paul might return in season to give me his arm.

My mother, Josephine, and the others were ready before me and were waiting for me to join them. I tore a button off my glove and prayed for time to sew it on again.

"Useless," said my mother, angrily; "here is a pin, make that serve instead of a button."

I took the pin and followed the party, looking anxiously all the time for the return of Paul.

A voice accosted me as follows: —

"Signorina, as your cavalier is absent, will you accept of my arm in place of his?"

I looked up and found that it was the young man who had told Domenico of his preference for me. O God! what an embarrassment! How could I get rid of him? I was in doubt whether to accept, or rudely refuse. My mother was watching me closely, and several other persons of the party heard the offer.

Urbanity, confusion, and fear combined, prevailed. I took his arm diffidently, as though I feared some contagion, and walked without saying a word.

At the corner of the street who should I see, notwithstanding the immense crowd of people, but Domenico himself. He came up to my side with a deathly pallor on his cheeks, and looking like an infuriated vampyre.

He turned an evil eye first on my companion and then on me, as though he would destroy me; at the same time pronouncing some unintelligible words.

I screamed. The noise of the streets fortunately pre-

vented its being heard, except by those nearest us. Meanwhile, we had separated from Domenico, and as we were going in different directions, he took his own way and we ours. My fears were not quieted, however; for I knew his impetuous character, and feared that he might return with some weapon of death and attempt either my life, or that of the poor youth at my side.

I was a little quieted only when we reached the Exchange. Entering the large saloon, I told Paul, who, in the mean time had come up, to follow me on to the balcony, and there I narrated to him what had happened; at which he appeared to be much grieved, and said that he would immediately make the necessary explanations to Domenico, and establish my innocence with him.

Those who have been in love will be able to comprehend my present condition. I loved Domenico dearly, and was, moreover, very careful not to give him the slightest motive for jealousy, — and all the time I appeared to him as a frivolous and inconstant woman.

At dawn of the following morning we began our preparations for our return voyage, and in a few hours we were in Reggio.

Paul came in the evening, very early, as usual. I asked him, by signs, if he had seen Domenico, and he replied, in the same manner, that he had.

He told me, a little later, that Domenico's fury had driven him to the verge of desperation. He had re-

solved to cut off all relations, whatsoever, with me, forever, and had promised his father that he would go to Naples without any further delay. His word was already pledged to that effect and he could not retreat.

Notwithstanding the sharp reproofs of Paul and the explanations given him of my behavior exercised a beneficial influence on his spirits, he was far from repenting of the step he was about to take and which had been determined upon in a moment of rage.

I arose, unable to restrain the emotion which the words of Paul had produced on me and, retiring to a quiet corner of the room, meditated for a few moments. Then recovering myself, I returned to my seat which I had left by the side of the confidant of my sufferings :—

"A last favor I have to ask of you," I said, with a firm voice. "Do me the favor to see Domenico again, if for nothing else than to say to him, in my name, that I am the only party who has any right to be offended in this affair. He can go away, or stay in Reggio, as he pleases. I shall take no further notice of him, knowing myself to be entirely innocent of the fault he attributes to me. He will find in Naples, perhaps, a woman who will be more faithful to him than I have been."

From that moment, true to the resolution I had taken, and strong in my loyalty to it, I showed in every possible way, by my actions, that I was determined to detach myself from him; but he, sincerely repentant,

had already recommenced his accustomed promenades under our windows.

It was Sunday, and the day fixed for his departure for Naples was the following Tuesday.

As I have already said, there was, in our house, a small chapel, which opened into the church of San Augustine. Here, while I was listening to the mass, I discovered Domenico opposite to me. After the mass was finished, I was about to retire; but, to a pathetic appeal which he made to me, by signs, asking me to remain a moment, I had the weakness to listen. After all the people had left the church he approached the grating, and, joining his hands, in a supplicating manner, said to me: —

"Forgive me; I confess my fault."

I looked at him; the expression on his face was such as to disarm the strongest resentment; with tears in my eyes, I replied: —

"Cruel man! the day after to-morrow you go away; abandon me; and now you ask my pardon!"

"By this sacred place in which we are," he added, "I swear that in one month I will return to you, notwithstanding the orders of my father, who wishes me to remain away a whole year."

"I accept your pledge; and, on this condition, I forget your outrages."

We heard some one cough near us, and were admon-

ished by that, that we might have listeners, and Domenico said "Adieu" hurriedly.

"Adieu," I responded, in a voice suffocated by emotion.

As he was passing out of the church door, he turned round, and said: —

"Do not deceive me!"

Deceive him! What object could I have to do that, now that he had renewed his vows to me? What better fortune could I desire?

CHAPTER IV.

SORROW.

Earthquake at Reggio — We fly for safety to the piazza — Meet Domenico — His interview and reconciliation with my mother — He goes to Naples — We return to our house — Sudden illness of my father — His death.

The era of peace had rekindled the tender passion in both our hearts. On Monday, Domenico passed many times under my window. I readily distinguished his steps; and, when I was certain of not being discovered by my mother, I ran to the window to salute him; and it was already midnight before we retired.

I went to bed very much distressed, and remained a long time unable to sleep. After an hour, I was startled by a terrible noise, which seemed like the roaring of an earthquake, and which frightened me terribly. I raised myself in bed, and, turning round, attempted to sit up, but another heavier shock threw me over.

With the oscillations, the creaking of the windows, and the ringing of the bells in the house, every one was awakened. Josephine jumped out of bed, and I followed her, with a weak and uncertain step, to the room of our parents, who, meeting us by the way, directed us to dress ourselves as quickly as we could; for that

we must all go immediately and seek refuge in the open air, in the grand piazza, which was near to our house. Another shock, stronger than the preceding, terrified us still more. My mother took one of the little children in her arms, and I seized the other, which, in the street, I was obliged to consign to a servant, in order to arrange my disordered dress.

My hair was very long. The tresses, flowing loosely, fell in disorder over my shoulders. I felt some one take hold of my hair, and, turning round, found Domenico, who whispered in my ear: —

"God bless the earthquake, which has afforded me the happiness of seeing you again, and of once more saying adieu!"

"Will you return soon?"

"Yes, dear; I will only stay in Naples a month."

The firm tone in which this promise was uttered was in striking contrast to the trembling of the earth on which we stood, under the influence of the tremendous phenomena which was agitating it at that moment.

The people all fled from their houses, for safety, into the open air. The great noise which was made by the toppling over of the chimneys on the roofs of the houses, the howling and barking of the dogs, and the crowing of the cocks were deafening; even the birds, alarmed by the fearful commotion, abandoned their nests, and, flying back and forth over our heads, uttered the most piercing lamentations. It was, in short,

a scene of confusion, of universal terror, and of desolation, the remembrance of which will never be effaced from my mind.

Domenico approached my father and saluted him. He received him politely, and they talked together for nearly an hour, during which time the shocks of the earthquake succeeded each other incessantly. Being obliged to set out, however, before sunrise, and seeing daylight about to break in the east, he took my hand and kissed it, and then took a respectful leave of my father. Passing in front of my mother, he saluted her. She spoke to him, and inquired: —

"Is it true, Signor Domenico, that you are about to leave us?"

"In half an hour I must embark, signora. I go hence in pursuance of orders from my father; but, God willing, I shall return not later than a month hence. Then, either with or without his consent, by the aid of my grandfather, I shall again demand the hand of your daughter. I hope you will not refuse your consent any longer, seeing that no opposition is likely to diminish the ardent love which we entertain for each other."

"Very well," answered my mother; "on your return we will talk further about it."

She gave him her hand, which he reverently kissed, and said: —

"Mother, dear, be merciful."

She smiled, and he went away contented.

Tears bathed my cheeks, and my distraction took away the power of speech. I confided to the charity of looks the pathetic message which the tongue refused to articulate. As long as we could, we kept our eyes fixed on each other, and when he disappeared from sight, still, by favor of the sense of hearing, I recognized his receding footsteps.

I believe that every one has, in the course of his or her life some inauspicious date, some critical event, some sinister recollection, from which may be dated a series of uninterrupted disasters. The unlucky hour of my life, was, by the horoscope, cast in the middle of that frightful night, in which the earthquake menaced the destruction of Reggio and the other cities of Calabria.

Other griefs I had not experienced, till now, than those which are common to maidenly experience; and every one knows the secret compensations by which these disappointments are tempered. Henceforward, however, every joy is subdued, the heavens are overcast, and the laugh is no longer for me. From this point begins my dolorous story.

Inde lachrymæ.

Apprehensive of further disasters from the earthquake, we did not venture to return to the house until the evening of the sixth day; and not even then because we felt that the danger was at an end, but because my

father was already suffering in his health from this long exposure, and was threatened with more serious illness.

I loved, I adored my father, with a degree of tenderness unusual. I loved him more than I did my mother, and for very good reasons. There are parents who are not content with manifesting unjust predilections in favor of one or more children, but they also have the imprudence to make incautious exhibitions of such preferences. My mother, I am grieved to say, was not exempt from this weakness. I know not from what instinct, but she was prone to these domestic preferences, and took no pains whatever to conceal them from those who did not happen to share her favors. Now, among the number of those who were her favorites, my name was not found, certainly; and no day passed in which some new proofs of it were not distinctly shown. My father, in compensation for this want of maternal affection, redoubled his own.

On the evening of September 21, I was seated at the piano, endeavoring to divert him, and was singing an air from "Norma" which he was fond of. I heard a deep-drawn sigh. I supposed some unpleasant thought had intruded itself upon his mind, and continued to sing.

A second sigh, followed by a subdued prayer, arrested my attention.

I arose quickly, and, approaching him, inquired what disturbed him so much.

"It is not that," said he; "but I feel ill, and I am sorry that I am unable to take you to the theatre, to-night, as I promised."

"What do you say? Is it for this you grieve? Then I shall lay aside my preparations, and all desire to go to the theatre."

I called Josephine and my mother. He said to the latter that he had felt himself seriously ill since noon, and that he believed that his sufferings were symptoms of approaching death.

We led him to his room, our hearts almost breaking at this announcement, and sent immediately for the physician. The next day, a consultation of doctors was held, and they declared that his disease was inflammation of the bowels. At the fourth day, the physicians had but little hope left of his recovery; and at the seventh, having announced that all their remedies had failed to afford any relief, it became necessary that the last comforts of religion should be speedily administered.

No one who has not been left an orphan in early life can comprehend the violence of my grief, or of my despair at this announcement; for I was about to be bereaved of a parent on whose affection all my present and future happiness was centred.

. . . . .

The melancholy services — extreme unction — being finished, we returned to his room. We found him

lying upon his right side, with his back towards the door by which we had entered.

My face was disfigured by crying. The nurses made signs to me not to come near him, and I sat down near the door, and endeavored to restrain my tears.

A distressing silence reigned within the room, interrupted only by the painful respirations of my father. His eyelids, which had long been half closed, opened suddenly, and he cried: —

"Enrichetta!"

I approached the bed, but he had already relapsed into a lethargic state, and could not speak. After a moment, he tried to raise himself again, and called, more loudly than before: —

"Enrichetta!"

"Here I am!" I said; "here I am! What do you wish, father dear?"

He regarded me with an anguished but very tender expression of his eye, which I can never forget, and then asked: —

"Why did you leave me?"

"I am near you," I replied, suffocated with sobs. He continued: —

"Do you know that I have received the sacrament?"

"I do."

"I feel my soul at peace," he replied. "There is but one thing that troubles me, now, and that is your future. . . . What is to become of you, poor child?"

Prophetic words, which have haunted me ever since, and at every step of my life!

The next day, he was failing rapidly. In a lucid interval, he called my mother to him, and said, in accents feebly articulated: —

"Teresa, take these poor girls away. The sight of them oppresses my heart. They will lose their father before having husbands who can protect and succor them. In my last moments I must think only of the divine mercy, and leave them in its care."

My mother made signs for us to approach, and we all knelt down by the side of the bed. He extended his trembling hands and blessed us, and, looking at us one after the other, he finally closed his eyes.

In the evening, the confessor entered our room with a sad countenance, which, with his silence, assured us that we had no longer an earthly father.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLOISTER.

Funeral of my father — Return to Naples — We meet Domenico there — We mutually pledge ourselves to each other — He returns to Reggio — His jealousy — My mother breaks off the match — A servant of my aunt, the Abbess of San Gregorio, brings me a present of confectionery, and informs me that the nuns of that convent have voted to admit me — Astounding news — I demand an explanation from my mother, who assures me that it is her own work, and that she is driven to it by her stinted means, as well as by the determination to prevent my marriage with Domenico — She assures me that I may leave the convent at the end of a couple of months, if I do not like it — Visit the convent with her — First impressions — My mother thanks the nuns, according to custom, for admitting me — Return home — Preparations — Marriage of my sister Josephine — Entrance into the convent — Sensation of horror.

Maria Theresa, of Austria, second wife of King Ferdinand, had, meanwhile, given birth to a son, who was named Luigi, Count of Trani, on which account, and to give eclat to this fortunate event, a great festa was ordered to be celebrated throughout the kingdom, with three days of rejoicing.

The funeral obsequies of my father, which it was necessary should be observed with the honors due to his rank and office, could not, therefore, be celebrated during the time of this festa. His body was consequently embalmed, and the ceremony was deferred until after the festa.

By the death of our father, we found ourselves sud-

denly deprived of the means of livelihood. It became necessary, therefore, to have recourse to the king, and to remind him of the long public services of our father, in the hope, thereby, of obtaining a pension for our mother.

It was deemed necessary that we should proceed immediately to Naples, to see the king, and, on that account, we were obliged to leave the mortal remains of our father unburied, and in the care of our brothers-in-law. With tears in our eyes we embraced our elder sisters, who were married here, and the younger ones, also, who, in their placid innocence, were sleeping; and our mother, Josephine, and myself took leave of Reggio at daylight, on September 29, for Naples.

We had a prosperous voyage. Twenty-seven hours from the time of our departure we found ourselves comfortably installed in furnished apartments on the Toledo.

To return to Domenico.

This domestic catastrophe united me unexpectedly to him again. Paul had advised him, by mail, of the misfortune which had overtaken us; but it was not yet time, owing to the infrequent transit of the mails, for him to receive the news.

The day after our arrival, Josephine and I were seated at the window. She was the first to perceive Domenico among the crowd of passengers. We opened the window and went out upon the balcony, to attract his

attention. After the death of my father, my thoughts naturally recurred to him, as to an anchor of hope. He saw us; but, at first, thought he must be dreaming.

He stopped, confounded, looking at us and examining us carefully. The mourning clothes in which we were dressed evidently perplexed him. At this moment our mother coming upon the balcony, he comprehended, by her presence, that it must be our father who was dead.

He entered a cafe, tore a leaf from his memorandum-book, and wrote a note to my mother, asking permission to come and inquire personally into our affairs. It was but the work of a moment.

In meeting him again I could not restrain my tears, and he was himself much moved. He stopped a long time with us discussing our affairs, and, in leaving, said that our misfortunes would not alter his sentiments towards me; that he even deemed the present occasion propitious to hasten our wedding; and that we should no sooner be able to despatch our business, and return to Reggio, than he would follow us, in order to make a respectful demand of his father, as the law required, in case he should still persist in his determination not to consent to our union. After these assurances, my mother gave him permission to come and see us every evening.

Many days passed, meanwhile, before we were able to get an audience of the king. We finally obtained it, and he granted to my mother the pension she asked for.

Josephine, in the mean time, had met with a gentleman, who was so well pleased with her that he preferred a request for her hand in matrimony. This retarded our departure from Naples, since the necessary preparations for the wedding would require my mother to remain a while longer there. It was already in the middle of November, and the nuptials could not take place before the first of January.

One evening Domenico came to see us, looking pale and wretched. Asking him the reason of his distress, he showed us a letter from his father, which he had just received, in which he directed him to return to Reggio forthwith. To enforce obedience, he refused to send him any more money, and, as he had no other pecuniary resource whatever, he was compelled to comply with his father's demands, and to return to Reggio immediately.

Two days subsequently he made me the most fervent promises of constancy, obtained mine in return and departed, and we were again, alas! separated, to meet, — where?

Many days were now spent in making visits to, and receiving them from, our relatives and friends who had not known of our arrival in the city before. The most assiduous in visiting us was Gen. Saluzzi, whose sister was the widow of the Prince of Forino, the brother of my father. He took a lively interest in us and in our affairs. Three aunts, Benedettine nuns, one of the

convent of San Patrizia, and the other two of San Gregorio Armeno, were very kind to us, also. They resembled very strongly our lamented father, their brother, though they were older than he.

Having left Naples when I was only six years old, and remained away until the present time, in Calabria, I did not know, personally, any of our relatives. All was new to me. One of these before-mentioned aunts, the one, in fact, after whom I was named, was, I had forgotten to say before, the abbess of the convent of San Gregorio Armeno.

Domenico, meanwhile, wrote often to my mother, assuring her, in every letter, of his having taken some new step towards facilitating our wished-for marriage. His father still showed himself averse to it, but he felt certain that he would ultimately yield to his prayers, and to the more accredited intercession of his grandfather. From the tone of his letters, however, it began to appear that, on account of my prolonged absence, he was agitated in his mind anew by the demon of jealousy. A few days subsequently, we received a letter, to which there was a postscript addressed to me, in the following words: —

"Dear Enrichetta, — Noxious to love is the air of Naples. The fascinations of that city leave me no peace on your account. Return soon, if you love me with a true love, — and if, on the receipt of this, you do not

speedily return to Reggio, I shall hold myself released from all the obligations which I have made to you.

"DOMENICO."

On reading this message my mother became furiously angry, and, without taking into account the suspicious character of Domenico, she took up her pen and wrote as follows: —

"SIGNORE, — You pretend to impose terms upon my daughter, before having any right to do so. She is not yours; nor shall she ever be. From this point let all thoughts of matrimony, between you and her, be dismissed. TERESA CARACCIOLO."

Neither supplications nor tears, which I employed freely, were able to change her determination. The letter was sent off. Domenico never wrote again. I, however, indulged the hope that, on my return to Reggio, his affection would be rekindled, if the cold breezes of jealousy should not be strong enough to extinguish it.

But my adverse star had otherwise ordained. I feasted upon splendid hopes, while at my feet the abyss was already opening, which was to swallow me.

Christmas was approaching, and the nuptials of Jose-

phine, it had been decided, were to take place in a private manner, on the second of January.

My mother went out one morning, saying, as she did so, that urgent business required her to go alone, but that she did not expect to be away from the house a long time.

She returned, in fact, after an hour's absence. I observed her closely; she seemed to be in exceedingly good spirits, and on this account I inferred that she had succeeded to her satisfaction in the affair which had called her out. I cannot suppress the fact that my heart palpitated with anxiety, thinking that she might have been weaving, unknown to me, some project of matrimony, which might definitively separate me from the object of my affections.

A few days only had passed, after this mysterious walk, when, one morning about eight o'clock, the door-bell rang. The servant was absent, and I went to the door.

A servant, whom I recognized as one in the employ of my aunt, the abbess, had brought, on a tray, a present of some *dolci* (confectionery).

At the first sight of this present I was confused, supposing it might be, perhaps, the first step towards a proposal of matrimony. Such was the custom in some families. The countenance of the servant, however, reassured me, and I breathed more freely.

"Are you the Signorina Enrichetta?" she inquired.

"Yes," I replied.

"The Signora Abbess, your aunt, salutes you."

"Thanks! thanks! salute her in return for me."

"And she desires you to know that the Capitolo has voted unanimously to admit you into the convent."

"For my admission! — for me! — Good child, you are mistaken," said I, laughing with all my heart.

"Yes, signorina, for you, yourself. I am not mistaken, — no. Come to the convent soon, then, and thank the sisters, and appoint your day of entrance."

My mother, finding that I was detained at the door, came to see what was the occasion, and arrived in time to overhear the last remark of the servant-girl. Knowing that her announcement, so unexpected and so horrible, would astonish me, and, perhaps, deprive me of the power of speech, she pushed me aside, and coming forward herself, said to the servant: —

"Very well; very well; thank my sister-in-law cordially, and say to her that the young nun will come there to-day."

Saying which, she closed the door, and, taking me by the hand, now colder than ice, led me into her own room.

Had I been prostrated by a thunder-bolt, I could not have received a more frightful shock.

I burst out into frightful sobs, and threw myself upon my face on the pillows of the sofa, which I drenched with bitter tears; then, clasping her knees, I implored her compassion on her unhappy offspring.

She, imperturbable of countenance, although not incapable of emotion, dried my face with her handkerchief. Then, in a grave tone of voice, and in measured words, which sounded in my ears like a sentence of capital punishment, she said that she had been constrained to place me in the convent because of the condition of her finances, as well as on account of my caprice for Domenico.

"Your aunts," she added, "are rich; consigning you to them until I begin to receive my pension will be a relief of some weight. I am sure, besides, that the quiet of the convent will serve to calm your heart, now disturbed by this foolish passion. But if, after two months' residence there, the kindness of your aunts shall not have driven from your heart its abhorrence of the convent, I promise you that I will then take you out. It is impossible for me now to retreat, the Capitolo having already voted for your admission."

"Mamma!" I exclaimed, prostrating myself again before her, "mamma, do not place me there, for mercy's sake! At the very thought I feel myself driven almost to desperation."

She arose, leisurely, and loosening herself from my embrace, said, in a severe tone: —

"Your father has left for you neither dower nor teachers. I am the sole arbiter of your movements . . . the laws of God and man impose obedience upon you, and by my faith in God I will be obeyed."

I refrained from further protests, either of words or of

sobs. Besides, nothing which I could have said would have produced any better effect. If, under the Bourbon regime, the god Silence was the tutelar deity of the orator and the philosopher, how much more need was there for the use of it, for a young girl, a minor, an orphan, and forsaken!

Seeing me speechless, petrified, with hands clasped, with upturned eyes, and with the most profound consternation expressed in my attitude, she seemed to be finally moved with some compassion for her daughter, and softening her voice and coming to caress me, smoothing and arranging my hair, she began to exhort me, in accents less severe and in a manner more conformable to maternal kindness.

She said: "The convent is not a prison, as the world generally supposes; it is a perfect garden of health, an inviolate asylum, where souls, superior to social vanities and disgusted with the deceptions of the world, retired within its walls, never breathe an atmosphere contaminated by the fatal breath of the passions, nor subject themselves to the tempests which affect the people of the world. You will find in this retirement a profuse supply, not only of spiritual comfort, but also all the comforts of a pure life, and in fact all the refinements and the honest recreations of the fashionable world. If it were not thus, why would they be filled by hundreds of young ladies of the first families of Na-

ples, heirs to so much property and to such splendid worldly prospects?"

Finally, my experience of convent life was to be confined to a brief sojourn of only two months, at the end of which time I should have my liberty without fail, if I wished it, to make such use of it as I pleased. All this, and many other things besides, she said, to console me.

Meanwhile she had proposed to take me to the convent during the day, but my eyelids were so much swollen from weeping that she was afraid to do it, and was obliged to defer it to another day.

The following day, seeing it would be in vain to wait for any more quiet frame of mind, she ordered me to get myself ready. Poor Josephine! I had neither the wish nor the heart to say good-by to her! It was she who got me ready. My mother first reproved me for my hesitation; then encouraged me, saying, "You may rest assured that in two months' time I will come for you, and take you out."

We entered a carriage, and on arriving at the convent I alighted at the door with a heavy heart, and went up the first flight of steps crying all the way. In opening the door above mentioned, the door-keeper rang a bell to announce to the community that their victim was about to enter!

My aunt, the abbess, was near the door and was the first to welcome me. Quite happy to see me, she em-

braced me, and whispered in my ear in an affable, but at the same time imperious tone, that it was my duty to thank the nuns for the favor they had shown me in accepting me as their companion. The venerated countenance and voice of my father were present to me again in the face and in the tones of her voice, and affected me to such a degree that I was near fainting.

Meanwhile the nuns came crowding around to see me, one head appearing above the other, seating themselves finally upon the settee. They made their comments about my person in a low voice. Some thought me handsome; others ugly; some thought me congenial; others quite otherwise; some saw a pleasant countenance, and others only a repulsive one. I, meanwhile, felt oppressed; almost suffocated. I would have preferred rather to die than to enter of my own will a place where the book of civilization promised so little, from the "preface" to the "finis."

The thanks which the abbess desired me to express to the nuns were proffered, not by myself, but by my mother, who, among other things, told them that the sadness on my face must be attributed to the recent death of my father, and to my separation from my family. Her remarks, which were few, and well seasoned with compliments in my name spoken, were interrupted by the arrival of my other paternal aunt, who was called Lucretia, and who, on account of some accident to one

of her limbs or to her back, had to be supported by two *converse* (servant-nuns).

The nuptials of Josephine had been appointed to take place January 2, 1840. It was determined, therefore, between my mother and my abbess-aunt, that I should make my formal entrance into the convent two days after the wedding.

On my return to the house I refused food altogether, and to the fatal day of entrance I did not cease weeping.

How many magnanimous efforts did not my paternal relatives make to induce my mother not to sacrifice me in this manner! She replied, that to place me for two months in a convent among ladies of noble birth was certainly not immolating me. And that such was, at that time, her sole intention I had occasion a little later to know.

The Princess of Forino offered to take me into her own house for these two months, and her sons, my cousins, pledged themselves that I should marry the Duke of ——, a very distant relative of the family and a widower. My mother returned thanks for these kind offers, but declined them, saying, that as to the proposition of matrimony, she would speak further on her return from Calabria.

Not only our immediate relatives, but also those more remote, as well as friends, emulated each other in striving to do something for me. General Saluzzi, a gentleman endowed with an uncommon degree of phi-

lanthropy and a fellow-soldier of my father, assured me that whatever might be my future condition, he would give me a thousand ducats, whenever I should claim them.

The evening of January 2 arrived, and the nuptials of Josephine were celebrated, as had been proposed. I accompanied her, still crying. Inseparable are tears from the drama of my life! She was leaning on the arm of a man whom she loved, and who loved her; and I, miserable I, was compelled to tear myself away from her and from every other loved one.

My grief, the last sigh of one who was about to be lost to the world, saddened the rites. Fatal presage at such a ceremony!

The morning of the 4th January finally arrived. At that time I wore my hair in ringlets; as I was dressing it in my usual manner, my mother stopped me, saying:—

"What are you doing? do you think that is the style of dressing the hair in the convent? Take down your ringlets. This morning you must dress your hair perfectly plain."

"But, gracious heavens! I am not entering a convent to be made a nun," I replied, much excited. "If I am only to stay there two months, why should I entirely spoil my head of hair? Why not dress it as usual?"

"That I do not design to make a nun of you, you

know very well; but the abbess told me not to bring you to the convent this morning with your hair dressed as it was the other day, for fear the nuns might call you vain."

And in saying this she took the comb and with her own hands dressed it to suit herself.

A little while after, General Salluzzi came with the daughter-in-law of the Princess of Forino, who were to accompany me to the convent.

Passing along the street which leads from the Madonna delle Grazie in the Toledo to San Gregorio Armeno, I felt myself immersed in a state which participated of stupor and of trance. I seemed to be in the anguish of a sad dream. My memory was overcrowded with the dearest and most pathetic recollections of the past, from which I was about to be separated for a time, which was not fixed with any degree of certainty. I thought of the innocent amusements of my childhood, which I had shared with friends who had been more fortunate than I; of the tender caresses of my father, and of his fatal illness; of the joys of early loves and of Domenico. Alas! especially did my thoughts recur to him, — perfectly oblivious of everything that was being said or that was going on around me.

My mother had taken the precaution to cover my face with a thick veil, in order that my crying should not attract public attention along the street; nevertheless, the handkerchief which I had so frequent occasion to

carry to my eyes attracted the notice of the people, as I knew from the observations of the persons who accompanied me.

We arrived meanwhile at our destination.

The convent doors were opened wide: horrid *fauces* of a monster! I felt myself seized suddenly by unknown hands, pushed from behind, and drawn I knew not whither. I heard the creaking of the bolts, padlocks, and chains, by which the horrible doors were barred and secured; the ribbon with which my hair was tied up was torn off, my shawl taken away; and when I came to myself I found myself on my knees at a large chancel of richly gilded wood.

It was the *coro*.*

A nun said to me: —

"You should thank God for having brought you to this holy place."

I neither replied to her, nor offered thanks. My reason having returned, which for a moment had deserted me, a sad thought flashed across my mind: —

"The presage, alas! too soon confirmed, of my dying father."

* *Coro* is properly translated *choir*, but in a sense of the word to which we are but little accustomed, therefore the original word is used in this book. It is the place, or room, to which the monks and nuns in a convent go to participate in the religious services of the church, as well as for their own devotional exercises. They can only hear or be heard, see or be seen, by persons in the church, through a grating which is seen in the wall, generally near the high altar.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ABANDONMENT.

My mother deserts me — Two young nuns wait upon me around the convent — Description of the building and its appointments, pictures, etc. — Extracts from the old chronicle of Fulvia Caracciolo — Anxiety of the nuns that I should determine at once to take the veil — Paolina — Jealousy among the nuns — Angiola Maria — Visit of my mother, who cruelly deceives me — Illness produced by my incarceration.

When we left the coro the nuns offered to show me around the convent.

I inquired for my mother and was told that, not wishing to detain the general and my cousin, she had gone away with them, but that she would not fail to return to see me the following day.

Two young nuns, sisters, accompanied me. They were called Concettina and Checchina. I had need of air; my anxiety took away my breath. I accepted, therefore, their invitation to go with them to see whatever there was notable in the convent.

Our visit began with the sacred temple of San Gregorio l' Illuminatore.

It is said by intelligent archæologists to stand on the same spot which, in the antique times, was occupied by the temple of Ceres, which, with that of the Dioscuri, the large theatre and the basilica, surrounded the piazza

Augustale, now encumbered with the vast church and convent of San Lorenzo Maggiore. This is a mistake. The before-mentioned qualifications are not precisely applicable to this church itself, which was built on a different spot, when the antique temple was destroyed in consequence of the decree of the Council of Trent, which, about the year 1580, obliged the nuns to subvert the old order of things and arrange, in an entirely different manner, the interior portion of the structure, to conform to the rigors of the modern cloister.

They recount the legend that the temple of Ceres was converted into a Christian sanctuary, by the pious wife of Costanzo Cloro, and, being surrounded by large edifices, it was placed under the protection of San Pantaleone. Not less erroneous is this tradition. If my memory does not deceive me, this oriental saint lived about the time of Constantine the Great. That which is positively known, goes back to a very antique date and has special relation to iconoclastic persecutions which broke out in Constantinople, instigated by the Greek Emperor Leone l' Isauro, that crowned Luther of the middle ages. A band of monks and cloistral virgins deserted Greece at that time, in order to escape from the fanaticism of the clergy and of the reformers. Italy was invaded by them. Rome offered to the orthodox fugitives generous hospitality; and Naples, which had in common with Greece, not only the same origin and language, in part, and customs, but even the same rites

and liturgy, also submitted to the same hierarch. Naples then, and the neighboring provinces, found themselves encumbered with these exiles, who soon organizing themselves into religious communities, constructed innumerable cloisters under the order of San Basilio. Authors, worthy of all credit, tell us that alone in these our meridional provinces, exclusive of Sicily, there were about one thousand Grecian monasteries, great and small, so late as the middle of the fifteenth century, under the above-mentioned order.

The church and the convent of which I am writing enjoy the seniority among all the others of the same order founded in Naples, and had for protector, San Gregorio Armeno, because the fugitive virgins, who founded them, brought with them the relics of this apostle from Armenia. The fall of the Greek emperor, occasioned by the conquest of Mahomet II., and the subjection of the Byzantine patriarch, which grew out of it, led to the downfall of the character as well as of the oriental rite which the Basilian order had, until this time, conserved in Italy. For reasons not sufficiently well understood, the convents abandoned the rules of San Basilio, in order to embrace the other not very dissimilar and altogether homogeneous one of San Benedetto, even before the monasteries of Basilian monks were entirely Latinized, — a fact which occurred after those three potent and consecutive crises of the western church; the reform, Jesuitism, and the Council of

Trent; crises which succeeded each other during the sixteenth century.

In the façade of the church of San Gregorio, over a high basement with three arches in front, two orders of construction are raised, the composite on the doric. A few steps lead to the spacious atrium supported by four pilasters, over which is situated the large coro of the nuns. At the extremity is the principal ingress to the church, and entering there you find a single nave, with four chapels on each side and two open spaces, of a size equal to the chapels themselves, one-half of the front of which is occupied by two organs; one of these passages leads to the sacristy by a small door, and the other to the confessionals. A balustrade divides the nave from the presbytery, where the high altar is erected between four arches similar to those which support the cupola. The architectural order of the entire fabric is the composite, but crowded with cornices, leaves, and decorations of every species, all in gilt; the plain surfaces being decorated in the Damascus style, and there is no space on the walls not covered by frescos; decorations all of which are certainly better adapted to the ostentation of rich baronial palaces, or the theatres, than to the devout simplicity of the temples dedicated to our holy religion. The large door is of black walnut, richly carved in admirable relief, representing the four evangelists, and in the centre the two saints, Stephen and Lorenzo, surrounded by ornamental work. The

ceiling, which is of wood carved and gilt, is divided into three large compartments, in which are three pictures by Teodoro il Fiammingo, representing San Gregorio in his pontifical robes, with an open book in his hand, standing between two assistants at the altar; the second represents the same saint receiving the nuns into his order; and the third, the baptism of the Redeemer. The ceiling is further subdivided into small compartments, of divers forms, which contain another picture by the same Fiammingo, which looks like a large rose cut in wood. The two organs standing together, with the orchestra in the two open spaces, are rich in bizarre carving and gilded with fine gold. The chapels are ornamented with much fine work in marble, variegated in raised and perforated foliage, having a balustrade also of marble, ornamented in the same style; above this are other works in bronze, and in the centre a small chancel of the same design and metal.

Of the pictures, the three over the door, in which are represented the arrival and the welcome of the Greek nuns at Naples, as likewise that between the small windows, which also represents facts in the life of San Gregorio, those in the small divisions above the arches, those on the dome, and those finally of the grand coro, which represent scenes in the life of San Benedetto, are all from the hand of Luca Giordano. It may also be noted that of the three frames over the door, in that which is at the left of the observer, in the head of the

man who stands in the act of indicating a place to the nuns who have just landed from the boat, the painter has given a portrait of himself, at fifty years of age, which must have been about his age at that time.

Behind the high altar, which is constructed from the designs of Dionysius Lazzari, may be seen the great picture of the ascension of our Lord, by Bernardo Lana. In the first chapel, on the right side of the church, is a picture of the Annunciation, — a piece of fine coloring by Pacecco de Rosa. The third chapel is dedicated to San Gregorio Armeno, and is larger and more beautifully ornamented than the others. Over the altar, in the centre of two columns of red French marble, there is a very valuable picture by Francesco di Maria, representing the bishop saint, seated and surrounded by angels. On the lateral walls the saint is represented in two compositions, in one of which, he is going before King Thiridates in all humility, with his face transformed into the likeness of a hog; and in the other, he is taken at the moment of being drawn forth from lake Ararat, where he had lived with great suffering for fourteen years. These two pictures, painted with great force and truth of coloring, and with fine effect of light and shade, are from the pencil of Francesco Fracanzano, a pupil of Spagnoletto. By Cesare Fracanzano, brother of the former, are the lunettes over the pictures just described, which represent two different tortures which the saint suffered. The ceiling of this chapel is divided

into several compartments, where, in smaller dimensions, are related various scenes in the life of San Gregorio, by the same Francesco di Maria, whose pictures in fresco claimed the admiration of the same Giordano, who speaks of having much admired and praised them. In the fourth chapel, the picture of the Madonna del Rosario is by Nicolo Malinconico, pupil of Giordano. Of the chapels on the left, the first has a painting of the nativity of the school of Marco di Siena; the third, the beheading of John the Baptist, by Silvestro Morvillo, called *il Bruno;* and the fourth, in which is represented San Benedetto adoring the Virgin, who is above him, is attributed to Spagnoletto.

On the morning of March 3, 1443, it being Sunday, King Alfonso I., of Aragon, placed upon the head of his son Ferrante a crown of gold, and put into his right hand a sword ornamented with gems, thus confirming him Duke of Calabria, and his own successor in the kingdom, as he had been already proclaimed the day previous by the general parliament, in the saloon of the capitolo in San Lorenzo. One such solemn ceremony was performed with regal pomp, in the presence of the barons and of all the court of the king, in the antique church, already demolished, which we have just before mentioned.

In the same church were preserved, until 1574, the sepulchre of the nuns and the bones of the other defunct, in tombs which bear date from the earliest years

of the convent, as shown by the chronicle of Donna Fulvia Caracciolo, one of my ancestors, and a nun in the same convent, who lived about the epoch in which the cloister was first introduced. Very interesting is the description which she has given us of the transfer of these same relics from the antique church, to a more secure place; which event happened under the abbessate of Lucretia Caracciolo.

"There remained now," she writes, "only in the church, the sepulchres in which reposed the mortal remains of the sisters and other dead, and, since they remained uncovered, it grieved us to the heart, because we had no place in which we could preserve the remains of our predecessors; and all the more, because some had died, comparatively recently, whose bodies were still entire, and it occasioned many remarks, which we all felt more or less acutely, and, moved by these and our own compassion, on the night of October 20, 1574, in order not to frighten the other sisters, I, together with Beatrice Carraffa, Donna Camilla Sersale, Donna Isabella, and Donna Giovanna de Loffredo, first closing the doors of the church and reciting the service for the dead, caused the vaults to be emptied in our presence, using every possible diligence that they should be well cleaned, and we then placed the bones in another vault, in good order; we then had as many coffins for the dead as there were tombs, and, having deposited the aforesaid

relics in these, we caused inscriptions to be made on them for future recognition."

This passage, which I have often read in the original manuscript, has always made me shudder for fear that my own bones, destined, perhaps, to be consigned some day to the common receptacle of my companions, in the seclusion, should be subjected, some time or other, to the same vicissitudes.

It is also from this chronicle that we get our information about the ancient style of dress of the Benedettine nuns, and of the manner of reading their prayers in the Longobardo books.

"In regard to the dress, I will say that we wore white, with the tunic made in the manner of a sash, precisely like those worn in the present day by widows, but of the finest and whitest cloth. On our heads we wore a Greek band, modestly ornamented. We used the Longobardo books, and, therefore, the greatest part of our lives we spent in reading our prayers, which, being in those days very long, were recited by us with great solemnity. When the nuns made the profession, the ceremony was performed on three different days and in three different modes. First, they were initiated by the abbess; on the following day they said vespers, when their hair was cut off. After some months or years, according to the age, they took the second orders, which were some dignities in the coro. The third order was taken at a mature age, or after arriving at

fifteen, and, in taking this order, the mass of the Holy Spirit was first said; and while this was being recited, the hair was again cut. In this operation we drew over the forehead a garland of hair, which was then separated into seven locks, or tresses; at the extremity of each the abbess attached a pellet of white wax, and thus we remained until the mass was finished; when this was concluded, the abbess cut off these tresses and covered the head with a white veil, and we then put on a black dress over the white one, which, until that time, we had worn. The black one was cut two fingers shorter than the white, without which it was not lawful for any one to appear in the coro, on festa days.

"This dress then was the prerogative which conferred the active and the passive voice, and enabled the wearer to participate in the property of the monastery. This same dress is worn in the last illness, and in it the nun is buried. On week-days we officiated in the coro, wearing a black mantle, without which we were not permitted to repeat a line in that place; and this rule is observed even to this day."

In spite of these rigorous rules, it is true that the nuns of that time passed freely around among the different possessions of the monastery, where they were at liberty to remain for several weeks, going out in the morning and returning in the evening, by permission of the abbess, and for days, and even months, they had the privilege to remain in the houses of their relatives;

a custom which, to the honor of the monastical order in the Greek church, which does not recognize the authority of the Council of Trent, obtains even to this day.

There are preserved in the sanctuary of the monastery several relics of saints and martyrs, to which the nuns, and vulgar superstition attribute the power to work miracles. Besides the head of San Gregorio l' Illuminatore, which the fugitive Greek nuns brought with them, there are, also, the head of Saint Stephen, and that of Saint Biagio, which is covered with silver; a piece of the wood of the holy cross; two arms, one of Saint Lorenzo, and the other of San Pantaleone; the chair of San Gregorio Armeno, and the leather strap with which this saint was beaten; both objects which, by supernatural prerogative, have the power to cast out devils; the blood of Saint Stephen and that of San Pantaleone, which, if in a state of perpetual liquefaction, is not, however, of different colors, as is that of the same martyrs, worshipped in the church of Santa Maria in Vallicello, at Rome, and in the cathedral at Amalfi. This sacred anatomical cabinet furnishes excitement to the festas, which never fail of being periodically signalized by miraculous events.

The convent constructed around the church is very large. Entering by an external door, a commodious staircase is seen, which leads to a second door, on which we find the pictures of Giacomo del Po, in chiaroscuro, and whence we go to the different *parlatorii* (reception-

rooms.) Rich in ornament, inexhaustible in accommodations, and of princely magnificence, is the interior of this monastery, — this grand hotel of women, so proud of their noble descent that they will not receive for a sister in their community any young lady whose family has not belonged to one of the first classes in Naples. Very large and beautiful is the sleeping-room, or dormitorio; not less so the refectory. The coro, which opens into the body of the church, is spacious, as is also the cloister, in the centre of which there is a fountain and two statues, — Christ and the Samaritan, by Matteo Battiglieri; immense, and especially fine, are the terraces, which are on the roof of the convent, ornamented with flowers and paintings, from which we have one of the finest views of Naples to be had anywhere; for from this magnificent look-out may be seen the surrounding mountains and hills, the city itself, the bay, and the many agreeable walks and drives in the suburbs.

Besides the portions of the convent buildings already described, there is the chapel of Santa Maria dell' Idria (a corruption of the Greek word Odigitria), with the Byzantine picture of the Virgin worshipped under this name, and the pictures of Paolo de Matteis, a sumptuously ornamented chapel, and, finally, there is the saloon of the archbishop, where, among other monumental histories, is preserved the above-mentioned chronicle of the Caracciolo.

But it is time to return to my own affairs.

The novelty of the place, of the persons, of the objects, and of the customs, occupied my attention for a time. It was a new world for me, and entirely unknown. During this first visit around the convent building, I met many nuns by the way, and all asked me the same question: —

"Are you going to take the veil?"

"No," I replied, invariably.

At this response, smiling as though prompted by a supreme conviction, they added: —

"San Benedetto will not allow you to escape after you have once put on his robe."

Some days before entering the convent, the servant of my aunt came to tell me that a young nun, called Paolina, desired to make a friend and inseparable confidant of me, while I had as yet hardly set my foot in the convent.

I had already been several hours there and no one else had called on me, except the two sisters, whom my aunt had desired to accompany me around the building. I inquired of them about Paolina. They replied that she was young and accustomed always to divert herself in the society of a couple of *educande* (pupils). I had in fact already seen her, having met her in company with the same young girls, promenading in the cloister, and

I had wondered that she, alone, of all the nuns, had not approached nor saluted me.

As we were passing along under the arched corridor, on the ground floor, a little later, we met her again. I assumed an air of cheerfulness, smiled, and saluted her from a distance; and had the mortification to perceive that, instead of responding to it, they were exchanging some sneering remarks about me. But it did not end here.

Concettina asked me why I had inquired particularly about Paolina, and where I had known her. I then told her of the message which had been sent to me by my aunt. Checchina then remembered that Paolina, some days before, had had some difficulty with her young friends, and had sent the message to me only to spite them; but that soon after, becoming reconciled to them again, she had promised them not to approach me, as they had become very jealous of me.

"Jealous!" I exclaimed, surprised; "are there, then, jealousies among you?"

"Ah, very many, signorina! I could wish there were none!" responded the sisters, at the same moment.

"Mercy!" I added, "there will be all the discords, of course, too, which are inseparable from jealousy!"

It seemed so very strange to me, truly, that there should be jealousies among women; very strange and vulgar, the gossip of the nun Paolina; and perfectly pestiferous that there should be these discords in a house

hermetically closed and excluded from the beneficial influences of communion with the rest of humanity. From these symptoms of corruption, I perceived that I had now to associate with women, who, although noble by birth, had, however, only the negative sort of education suitable for their own domestics.

I waited for the evening with no little anxiety, to give vent to the uneasiness which was consuming me, in the expectation that I should have a room to myself. But what was my surprise at seeing a bed made up for me in the room of my aunt, the abbess, and by the side of it a third for her conversa (servant-nun)!

The comforts of solitude and of tears were also to be denied to me!

While my aunt was undressing herself and reciting her prayers in an undertone, I was compelled to endure the tormenting questionings of the conversa.

This woman, whose name was Angiola Maria, was about thirty-two years old, of an iron constitution, and very corpulent; her face was marked with the small-pox, and she had a very large mouth with black teeth; to all these, disgusting enough, certainly, were added, at one moment, an ill-natured and uproarious laugh, at another, a scowling look, with a ceaseless rolling of the eyes, which seemed ready to burst out of their sockets. Besides being uncivil and inattentive to my aunt, who was now well advanced in years, she was very petulant,

when interrupted by her, in her everlasting chattering, with some words of reproach.

She got into bed and went to sleep finally, leaving me alone with my sad thoughts; alone, in a silence not disturbed by any other noise than the isochronal beating of a pendulum-clock.

I was sleepy; overcome rather by nervous oppression than by sleep itself, when about daylight I was awaked by Angiola Maria, who inquired whether I would attend the first or second mass.

"When I am awake," I replied with a sigh, "I will go to whichever pleases you."

The conversa assisted me to dress, gossiping all the while, then taking me confidentially by the hand, as she would have done had I been blind, she went down with me to the comunichino (the place where the communion is administered), where we found several nuns assembled, listening to the mass and receiving the communion.

At ten o'clock my mother came; I found her seated in the parlatorio.

On seeing her I wept bitterly, and told her I was very unhappy in a place whose inactive and stupid seclusion was, it seemed to me, more insufferable than the prison itself; that it was a fearful martyrdom for me to be obliged to live with people not less ignorant than uncultivated, — who already were annoying me about taking the veil; that I feared to lose my health as I had lost

my liberty; and was subject to the caprices of the conversa of my aunt, who made me rise before daylight in order to keep me an hour in the church, exposed to a degree of cold which was insupportable, and to a discomfort which was sufficient to make me annoyed even with prayer itself.

She was about to answer me, when the portress, and some other nuns following her, entered to salute my mother. After exchanging compliments with them, she said she was then going to attend mass at San Lorenzo, but that later in the day she would return. She went out and I followed her, remaining under the corridor, immersed in the saddest reflections, which were produced by my abandonment.

An hour passed; an hour and a half; two hours even; whilst I was pacing the floor with slow and measured steps, and yet my mother did not return. Disappointed at her delay, I turned to the portress and asked her to send to San Lorenzo one of the women who were standing idly about the door, to inquire the reason why my mother did not come back according to her promise. The portress, taking me by the hand, said: —

"Have patience, my dear . . . . either from love or from force, it is necessary for you to drink of this cup."

"Of what cup do you speak?" I asked, frightened, and with a presentiment of some new misfortune. "I tell you that my mother is late in returning and I should like to know the reason."

"It is needless for you to wait here."

"Why?"

"Your mother has already gone to Reggio."

If she had not supported me, I should have fallen to the floor. I was perfectly stunned. I knew very well that my mother was to go away, but why should she go off the day following my seclusion? Why go without taking leave of me?

My nerves, already shaken by so many misfortunes, were unable to resist this last blow, and I was attacked with convulsions.

When I had recovered my senses and reopened my eyes, I found myself surrounded by a crowd of nuns, of converse and of educande, all strangers to me, and all intent on feeding their vulgar curiosity and the idleness and the apathy incident to their condition on the spectacle of my dejection. Some were whispering here; some commenting there; while others had an expression of sarcasm on their faces; not a single one directed towards me a look of sincere sympathy. The physician, Ronchi, who now entered the door, being in the employ of the community, administered some prompt remedies. The fever which supervened confined me to my bed for more than a week.

When destiny is adverse to you, it brings with it all sorts of misfortunes. Now for a month past I had begun to persuade myself that the abandonment on the

part of Domenico was only too real. I had till now nourished the hope, ever since my entrance into this sepulchre, not only of receiving a letter from him, but even of seeing him return to Naples to occupy himself with seeking my liberation. If his feelings for me were as strong as mine for him; if any generous sentiment dwelt in his breast; if the voice of humanity found any echo in his heart; if the recollection of my constancy and devotion should overbalance in his mind that of vile interest; how could he tolerate my falling a victim to my oaths of fidelity to him?

How many times have I looked from the coro into the body of the church, hoping to find him there! How many times have I, with anxious heart, stood upon the high terrace and looked for him in the different streets which are seen from thence! Often deceived by the similarity of walk or dress of some one who resembled him, have I felt myself on the verge of fainting, believing that the day of my ransom had arrived! But, alas! he never addressed a single line to me, nor did my mother ever mention him in any of her letters.

I saw Josephine from time to time, but the presence of this beloved sister only increased my grief. The injury from which she had suffered at the time of her fall was now declared to be incurable, and in order to go out at all she was obliged to use crutches. Occasionally General Salluzzi came to offer me such consolation as he could. My other relatives and friends no longer remem-

bered the poor orphan. It might be said, that an abyss already separated me from the whole world, in spite of the sympathy which I felt with humanity, and which always found an affectionate echo in my heart.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this general abandonment, one consolation alleviated my suffering; the elevation of my spirit to that God of charity, who was born, lived, and died, not for the mute homes of the desert, nor for inanimate solitudes, but for the good of humanity and the salvation of mankind, bound together by the sole and indivisible ties of fraternal love.

One evening in February, I was alone on the terrace. The rays of the descending sun were only seen glimmering on the summit of Vesuvius and on the heights of Castellamare, which being covered by snow reflected a brilliancy which seemed to delay the approaching twilight. An unusual silence reigned; the excitement of the carnival had attracted the people to the various centres of the city most frequented, to such a degree that the neighborhood of San Lorenzo, where the convent is situated, was quite depopulated. I could only hear the dying echoes of the popular exultation, which sounded like the roaring of the distant waves of the sea.

A new emotion took possession of me. In the free air and under the immense vault of the heavens, I felt myself alone, it is true, as before, but not isolated. The voice of the Almighty called me to the contemplation of his mercy. I sank on my knees and joined my hands

in prayer, raised my eyes to heaven, bathed in tears, and invoked the aid of the great Omniscient.

"Who and what am I?" I exclaimed, rising, and wiping away my tears; "what are my sufferings in comparison with those of the nation to which I belong? If, under the double yoke of spiritual and temporal tyranny, the whole of Italy languishes, shall I pretend, insignificant atom as I am, I alone, among so many millions who are oppressed, to consume my own life in contentment and prosperity?"

CHAPTER VII.

ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS OF NAPLES AND OTHER OF THE ITALIAN STATES.

The nation one vast monastical congregation — General statistics of monasticism — Number of establishments, priests, etc., etc., in Naples — List of the monasteries and convents, with the number of their inhabitants — Results.

Behold me separated now for an indeterminate time from that society in the communion of which I had lived twenty years; behold me thrown suddenly into the narrow limits of a negative world, in intimate and daily intercourse only with nuns, monks, and priests!

Shall I take advantage of this shipwreck to point out to the reader some regions as yet unexplored, in order to reveal some traits of the cloistral life, which have hitherto been inaccessible to all others, except to women? I will make the effort.

But before resuming the thread of my argument, in whose changing scenes clerical despotism and monastic demoralization will play a prominent part, it will not be unacceptable to the reader, I flatter myself, to give a brief view of the ecclesiastical establishments existing on our peninsula in general, and in Naples in particular. The condition of the clergy, both regular and secular,

is too closely associated in my memoirs, as well during the epoch in which I was subject to their power, as subsequent to the national regeneration; therefore I have not always deemed it necessary to place around these conditions any indications which would locate the scenes from time to time unfolded in the following episodes. Conscious, not less of my own incompetency, than of the limits of this work, I shall not certainly venture into critical considerations of the past and present state of the clergy in Italy. My intention being only to show, in rapid review, the frightful proportions of that social malady which infests our country in every corner, I shall confine myself to the authority of official returns, whose positive and persuasive eloquence will probably have more weight with the public than any amount of rhetorical declamation. These figures, being taken from statistical tables and official documents which have been recently issued, the reader may rely upon their correctness and their exemption from the adulterations which party spirit is accustomed occasionally to interpolate.

It is an incontestable fact, that when we consider the extent of territory and of population, there is no Catholic state, no Christian, even, which claims so large a number of bishoprics, of secular priests, of churches, of monasteries and convents, of monks and nuns, as may be counted in Italy; which has the sad privilege of being called, among all the cultivated nations of Europe, the Levitical state, *par excellence*. Until the

close of the last century, it was in reality a vast monastical congregation!

The secularized breath of modern civilization, although repelled and sometimes dissipated by the combined action of two indigenous enemies, inimical equally to the emancipation of the conscience and of the reason, — the reaction of the clergy and political despotism, — has not failed, however, to penetrate a little even in this direction. But in spite of the silent revolutions of principles and customs which excited in the present and preceding centuries the spontaneous extinction of several orders, and the fusion of many ecclesiastical establishments into a single one, — in spite of the laborious industry with which the French, during their occupation, at the period of the Republic, restricted to the narrowest possible limits the monstrous superfetation of the secular clergy, and suppressed in Piedmont, as well as in the ex-Bourbon kingdom, many monasteries and convents (about two hundred in the kingdom of Naples alone!), — in spite of the more recent precautions of the Italian government, relative to the gradual extinction of monasticism, — in spite of all these, Italy continues still to be, as she has been in times past, the Levitical state, *par excellence;* and it is aggravated by so much prelacy and hierarchy, by so many clergy, regular and secular, as still infinitely to exceed the wants of the people.

Greater still are the proportions of the different

orders of monasteries and convents, as set forth in one of the most accredited French journals (*Le Debats*). In France, at the period just now indicated, there were one thousand and eighty-one abbeys, in which there were eight hundred monks and two hundred and eighty-one women and six hundred and nineteen capitoli, among whom there were twenty-four noble ladies.

Let us look now at Italy.

Italy, with a little more than 24,000,000 population, against 37,000,000 of France, has eighty-two different religious orders, and two thousand three hundred and eighty-two monasteries and convents; and it may be said, that she possesses now, in 1864, double the number of monastical establishments, which, in 1789, existed in France, a country notoriously larger and more populous.

The sum total of these 2,382 monastic establishments is thus divided: 15,500 professed monks; 18,198 professed nuns; 4,474 *conversi* (servant monks); 7,671 *converse* (servant nuns); in all, 45,843; or, in fact, a number fully equal to that of the population of some of the inferior states of the Germanic confederation!

"Contrasting (continues *Le Debats*) the property of the clergy in France in 1789 with that of Italy in 1864, we find that in Italy, what with the corporations, the bishoprics, the buildings, the prebends, etc., they enjoy an immense income calculated in Italian lire (which is the same as the French franc), 75,266,216; while the

clergy of France were in the receipt of 133,000,000;" and its rental may be calculated at a quarter of that of all France, without exaggeration. Besides, when the decree of November 2, 1789, declared all this property to be national, it was estimated at 1,100,000,000 lire! The property of the Italian clergy amounts then to almost 2,000,000,000 lire, or a tenth less than double that which before the revolution of 1789 the clergy of one of the most opulent, potent, and populous nations of the earth possessed!

From special figures, we pass now to others more general. The comprehensive enumeration which follows is taken from the complete statistics recently published by the official journals of Naples.

"The number of the clergy, regular and secular, in all Italy, amounted in 1857–8 to 189,800 members; that is to say, 1 to every 142 laity, and they are distributed, in round numbers, as follows: —

82,000 in Naples and the Two Sicilies;
40,000 in the Pontifical States;
31,900 in Central Italy;
16,500 in the Sardinian States;
10,700 in Lombardy;
8,700 in the Venetian; or two-thirds as many ecclesiastics as there were in Rome, which counted at that time 12,000!"

We had, moreover, in Italy alone, 269 archbishops and bishops, which number is equal nearly to one-half the sees of all of Europe, and is nothing less than one-third the number in the entire Catholic world, which is only some 815.

If to these 189,000 priests, living in Italy, we add the Italian priests, who are distributed over the whole face of the earth, on the different missions, and also the acolytes, or young priests, who are taking orders, the novitiates of both sexes, and the class of the so-called nuns of the city, we shall have a total of about 200,000, which is sufficient to afford one priest to every 46 adults!

From general statistics we come finally to those of the city of Naples. The following will show how the secular clergy of this city were distributed twenty years ago, by rank and number: —

Archbishops,	3
Bishops,	7
Chapters of Canons of Archbishoprics,	30
College of the Seminarists,	18
"Quarantisti" of the Metropolitan,	22
Chaplains of the Royal Chapel del Tesoro di San Gennaro,	12
Capitoli of Canons of San Giovanni Maggiore,	15
Carried over,	107

Brought up,	107
Rectors dependent on the Archbishops, .	43
Royal Chaplains and others with honorary titles,	34
Priests, ...	3,027
	3,211

The number of parishes in Naples amounts to more than 50; that of the churches to 257; of the "Confraternities" to 174; of "Congregations of the Holy Spirit," 8; chapels for evening service, 57.

To the regular clergy we may be permitted to add, in tabular form, the entire enumeration, made at the same time, distributed by their different orders, by the number of monasteries and convents, by sex, by the number of persons, and by their rank. These are extracted from the authorized census, which was published about that time, in a work bearing the title of *Napoli e sue vicinanze.*

MONASTERIES.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS.		Number of Monasteries.	Number of Persons per Monasteries.		Number of Persons per Religious Orders.	
			Monks.	Novitiates.	Monks.	Novitiates.
Reformati,	di Gerusalemme a Montecalvario,	5	11		161	
	a San Pietro ad Aram,		94			
	alla Salute,		38			
	a Miano,		11			
	a Santa Chiara,		7			
Alcantarini,	a Santa Lucia del Monte,	3	101		197	8
	a San Pasquale a Chiaia,		49	8		
	alla Sanità		47			
Cappuccini,	a Sant' Efrem Vecchio,	3	25		97	6
	a Sant' Efrem Nuovo,		66	6		
	alle Trentatrè,		6			
Osservanti,	a San Francesco a Santa Maria la Nuova,	2	197	7	233	7
	in San Severo Maggiore,		36			
Agostiniani calzi, Sant' Agostino la Zecca,		1	41	1	41	1
Agostiniani calzi,	a Santa Maria Maddalena de' Spagnuoli,	3	30		57	
Id. scalzi,	a Santa Maria del la Verità,		20			
Id. calzi,	a San Carlo alle Mortelle,		7			
Bernabiti,	a Caravaggio,	2	10		22	
	a Pontecorvo,		12			
Cassinesi a San Severino,		1	6		6	
Camaldolesi Eremo del Salvatore,		1	28		28	
Total carried forward,		21	842	22	842	22

MONASTERIES.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS.	Number of Monasteries.	Number of persons per Monasteries.		Number of persons per Religious Orders.	
		Monks.	Novitiates.	Monks.	Novitiates.
Brought forward,	21	842	22	842	22
Canonici Lateranensi, a Santa Maria di Piedigrotta,	1	16	2	16	2
Carmelitani calzi, al Carmine Maggiore,	1	35	2	35	2
Carmel. scalzi, a Santa Teresa a Chiaia,	2	7		45	
Carmel. scalzi, a Santa Teresa agli Studi,		38			
Certosini, a San Martino,	1	20	3	20	3
Chierici Regolare Minori, di San Francesco Caracciolo,	1	15	7	15	7
Chierici Reg. Semplici, a Santa Maria in Portico,	2	19	6	30	6
Chierici Reg. Semplici, a Santa Brigida,		11			
Sacra Famiglia di G. C. detta de' Cinesi,	1	33	34	33	34
Padri della Missione, nella Casa de' Vergini,	2	45	13	57	29
Padri della Missione, a San Nicola Torentino,		12	16		
Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore, a S. Antonio di Tarsia,	1	16		16	
Minore Conventuali, a San Lorenzo Maggiore,	2	59	8	63	8
Idem. Ospizio a Largo Santa Caterina a Chiaia,		4			
Crociferi, a' Mannesi,	2	9	2	15	3
Crociferi, a Porta San Gennaro,		6	1		
Dottrinari, nella casa di San Nicola de' Caserti,	1	10	29	10	29
Total carried forward,	38	1197	145	1197	145

MONASTERIES.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS.	Number of Monasteries.	Number of Persons per Monasteries.		Number of Persons per Religious Orders.	
		Monks.	Novitiates.	Monks.	Novitiates.
Brought forward,	38	1197	145	1197	145
Domenicani, a S. Domenico Maggiore, / a San Pietro Martire,	2	65 11	3	76	3
Compagnia di Gesù,	1	117		117	
Mercedarii, a Sant' Orsola a Chiaia,	1	16		16	
Minimi di S. Fr. di Paola, al Largo di Palazzo, / alla Stella,	2	10 14	2 7	24	9
Pii Operai, a San Nicola alla Carità, / a San Giorgio Maggiore,	2	18 9	1	27	1
Padri dell' Oratorio o Filippini, a' Gerolomini,	1	28	6	28	6
Scolopi, a San Carlo a Mortelle,	1	32		32	
San Giovanni di Dio, alla Pace,	2	22	3	27	3
Santa Caterina, ad Colles,		5			
Chierici Regolari Teatini, a San Paolo,	1	26	3	26	3
Congregazione del Beato Pietro da Pisa, a Santa Maria delle Grazie Maggiore,	1	18	6	18	6
Total,	52	1588	176	1588	176

CONVENTS.

RELIGIOUS ORDERS.		Number of Convents.	Number of persons per Nunneries.		Number of persons per Religious Orders.	
			Nuns.	Educande.	Nuns.	Educande.
Domenicane,	a Santa Caterina di Siena,	3	29	12	146	39
	a San Giovanni,		59	7		
	alla Sapienza,		58	20		
Francescane,	San Francesco Iscariota alla Fiorentine,	4	45	2	234	24
	a Donna Regina,		69	5		
	a Santa Maria del Gesù,		42	7		
	a Santa Chiara,		78	12		
Cappuccine,	a San Francesco a Pontecorvo,	2	29	12	60	12
	a Trentatrè,		31			
Teresiane,	Santa Teresa alla Salita del Vomero,	1	21		1	21
Concezioniste,	al Divino Amore, . . .	1	35	9	35	9
Benedettine,	a Donnalbina,	3	43	6	132	32
	a San Gregorio Armeno,		56	20		
	a Santa Patrizia,		33	6		
Sagramentiste,	Adoratrici perpetue, . .	1	96	2	96	2
Carmelitane,	Santa Croce di Luca, . . .	1	85	10	85	10
Teatine,	Suor Orsola, ...	1	40		40	
Romite,	Suor Orsola, ...	1	22	1	22	1
Canonichesse Lateranensi,	a Gesù Maria, .	1	11	10	11	10
Agostiniane,	S. Maria Egiziaca Mag.	3	47	7	117	31
	Santa Monica,		28	13		
	S. Andrea delle Monache,		44	11		
Sorelle della Carità,	Regina Cœli,	2	87	160		
	Costantinopoli,		8			
	Total,	24	1096	330	979	191

From the foregoing we find that there were, at the epoch of my entrance into the convent in Naples, persons who, by their religious vows to inertia and celibacy, or who were preparing themselves for that condition in life, no less than about 6,720, distributed as follows: —

Priests and acolytes of the "Ordini Minori," .	3,507
Monks and novitiates, ...	1,767
Nuns, ...	1,094
Educande (female pupils), ...	352
	6,720

To which number must be added the sisters scattered about in the different *Conservatorii* and *Ritirii* of the city; and the class of *converse*, — a class remaining single, by the obligation of profession, if not by vows, and computed, approximately, at 2,000, — and we shall have a sum total of at least 9,000; which amounts to more than one-fiftieth part of the inhabitants of Naples, snatched away by the church, from social, industrial and domestic life.

More than one in fifty! Mercy! what epidemic, what murderous calamity has ever decimated a people so fearfully?

Three cities alone of Italy — Rome, Naples and Palermo — contain 30,000 citizens of the two sexes, strangers to the past, enemies of the present, and sterile to the future of their country!

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENES AND CUSTOMS IN THE CONVENT.

Mental characteristics of the nuns — Extracts from an ancient chronicle — An account of the assassination of a Genoese merchant — The confession — Substitution of priests for the monks at the confessional — I go to confession for the first time in the convent — Caresses from the priest on this occasion — Such caresses general — A change of confessors — Silly twattle of the new canonico — Maddalena jealous — Endeavor to obtain still another confessor — Thwarted — A tempest in a teapot — Disreputable *liaisons* between the confessors and their penitents — Wiles employed by the former to corrupt the latter.

Among the Benedictine convents of Naples, that of San Gregorio Armeno was the one which, at the period of my story, numbered the largest number of professed nuns. There were, in fact, fifty-eight there; a few well advanced in years; the greater part young, or, at least, not old; and all, it may be said, belonging to the most conspicuous, if not always the richest, families of Naples. I had, however, occasion to observe from the first day of my entrance into the convent, that the intellectual and moral status of these sisters did not at all correspond to the elevation of their birth. From the selfishness of unnatural parents or brothers, they had been destined, while yet in swaddling-clothes, to bury their minds, hearts, and personal charms in this solitude, and to immolate, less to religion than to the

avarice of relatives, all their affections, even to filial; and to make a solemn and inviolable renunciation of the duties and of the rights which bind the individual to the family, to the nation, and to humanity, without the least regard to the social inclinations, to the igneous temper, or to the fickleness of their hereditary characters. Educated with such motives; taught to avoid everything that would by any chance expand the sphere of their ideas, or discipline, or fertilize their minds, or socialize their habits; informed on no other subjects in the world than of legends, miracles, visions, and the various phantasmagoria of ascetics, drawn from the reading of the musty old books which the *Index Purgatorium* has conceded for family reading; never by any chance permitted, either in or out of the house to come in contact with any other than the members of their own families, or their own confessors; the nuns — the most illustrious of all the different orders, the Benedictines — I repeat, are as much wanting in the qualities which distinguish the well-born woman, as they are destitute of those which, in other more civilized society, render the religious character so estimable.

Let the historian, or the philosopher, who cannot find in the faded pages of the chroniclers, or in the depraved fantasies of the sixteenth century, materials out of which to reconstruct to the life that infamous era which inaugurated and subjected Italy to the domination of strangers, — let him enter, if he can, into a convent of

women. Living and throbbing there, he will find, in spite of the reforms of Trent, the morals of the century of the Borgias, of the Medici, of the Farnesi; the traditions of the courts of the Colonna, and of Pietro di Toledo; the prejudices of the Norman and Arragonese feudalism, with the gross ignorance and superstitions of the vulgar at the epoch of the auto-da-fé. What museum of antiquities can display, equal to a Neapolitan convent, — so full of life and motion, — the relics of the middle ages, curiously framed on the carved entablature of the era of Charles V., the pictures of the "Divina Commedia," and of the "Decameron," restored by the pencils of Calderon de la Barca and Cervantes? The funeral pall of the cloister has preserved this Necropolis uninjured, as the *stratum lapilli* preserves the papyri of Herculaneum, and the mummies of Pompeii!

My own experience of convent life confirms the judgment of the anonymous writer, who, in the preface to a "*Chronique Scandaleuse*,"* of apocryphal memoirs, has traced the history of the Neapolitan nunnery. Nor are the manners of to-day so far reformed that these considerations of an author of by-gone times may not be applicable to the present.

"At the period of the Norman domination," he writes, "the cloistral laws were introduced in all their vigor. The vows which some pious women pronounced were temporary and were renewed every year, with the priv-

* Cronica del Convento di Sant Arcangelo a Bajano.

ilege of selecting any other condition which might better suit them. These women then lived in a kind of religious freedom, which united, as in the case of the German canonesses, the advantages of society, to the regulations of a pure and edifying life. They bore the title of *oblate* (lay sisters), lived retired from the world, which they could re-enter at any moment, if they felt a desire do so.

"The absence of all contact with the world was no source of irritation either to the senses, or the imagination. Far from shrinking at the idea of solitude, it enabled them to contemplate with pleasure the possibility of returning to the world.

"The interior of such a convent was, for these reasons, an abode of decency and order, where that agreeable serenity reigned, which always accompanies a pure Christianity, which is a type of the poetic and the moral and an inappreciable quality in woman. In the absence of any sentiment more tender, confidence and friendship reigned among these women whose virtues would have rejected every worldly passion.

"The woman who desired to join the community was compelled to maintain herself at her own expense, until the moment in which, becoming contented with that life, she resolved to unite with the community and become a nun, and from that time she received from the establishment everything that was necessary to her. The superintendence of the whole was confided to the best

and wisest women in the convent, and the king confirmed the selection, which secured his protection to the establishment.

"During the reign of the House of Anjou, these women were the most perfect models of all the virtues, united to talents which were the fruit of a liberal education; but under the reign of Ferdinand, the Catholic, and of Charles V., when the highest privileges were bestowed on hypocrisy and the external semblance of piety, a marked change came over the relations which the nuns maintained with the people of the world.

"The disorder increased in proportion as the turbulence incident to wars and the vices of the delegated power threw the country into the anarchy of an oligarchy. It was then that the most potent, those who were invested with distinctions and resplendent with the brilliancy of the courts, were permitted to seduce these pious women, belonging to the first families, and afterwards to hand them over to the officers of the army, when the brilliancy of arms was found to bear away the palm from the magnificence and gallantry of the court. In this manner the seductions of love succeeded by corruption took possession of the minds of a host of youthful beauties, whose hitherto pure and spotless hearts had been, until now, inaccessible to aught but friendship and the sentiments which virtue inspires.

"It was at this time that the government not taking its stand upon constituted bases, but rather on the priv-

ileges and exemptions of the nobility, of the clergy, and the court of Rome, yielded to circumstances, and, impotent to prevent it, saw a multitude of its subjects perish before its eyes, victims of the reaction of so many powers, or saw them elude the chief of these, — that which emanated from the throne.

"The Aulic council passed judgment on the individuals that belonged to the court and the army; the clerical body had its own tribunal, which appealed to the court of Rome, and the monastic bodies depended directly upon it. The Archbishop of Naples and the Nuncio had their own prisons, in which they incarcerated any male or female who was subject to the church, and often secreted in them those they wished to screen from the sovereign power. Every church, convent, and feudal palace enjoyed the privileges of a sanctuary, and retained in its pay the most notorious bravos. A correspondence between Naples, Rome, and Sicily, by the means of boats which navigated the Tiber, carried on all the operations of the government and managed all intrigues; and it might be possible to prove, perhaps, that without the intervention of the Roman Curia, the memorable Sicilian Vespers would never have taken place. When these dark agencies did not succeed to secure the escape of any one who was guilty, a papal bull was sure to arrive, taking the accused from the hands of justice and turning him over to the priests.

"Oftentimes an inhuman father, capricious and ava-

ricious, and assisted by the authority of the nuncio, or of the bishop, would throw his daughter, whose support caused him embarrassment, or the wife, whose fidelity was suspected, into a convent. When the honor of a noble damsel was publicly compromised, and when her accomplice was not positively known to her relatives, she and the man on whom their suspicions fell were either assassinated and buried, or imprisoned secretly; or, finally, when disposed to try gentleness and moderation, the young girl was sent out of the world, and the man, emasculated, was compelled to enter the monastery and pronounce the vows.

"In those days the condition of women, here, was worse, perhaps, than it is now in Turkey. The mere shadow of suspicion; a calumnious accusation; a hallucination begot by jealousy; the false deposition of a rejected lover; sufficed to assemble, in all haste, a family council, under the same mysterious circumstances in which the Spanish Inquisition was wont to envelop its tribunal, when it would thunder against the accused that sentence which, according to the prejudices of the period, could alone wipe off the stain from the family escutcheon, in the public eye. Nor, to wash away the stain, often imaginary, did they know, or seek to know, any other means than through blood. Conformably to this barbarous code, the woman, if living in the house, was stabbed or strangled in her own bed; if marriage-

able, she was condemned to the civil death of convent seclusion, or destroyed by poison.

"The whole peninsula was utterly incapable of offering any escape to the man on whose head fell the suspicions of the domestic inquisition. The hand of the hired assassin, armed with the traitorous dagger, would have followed him to Rome, to Florence, to Milan, and even to the more liberal soil of Venice; would have found him in the inmost recesses of the remotest monastery; would have transfixed him at the foot of the altar itself! This thirst for arbitrary reintegration was very imperious; it was so thoroughly incarnated in the prejudices of the century that more than one cardinal has placed the dagger in the hands of the assassin, — more than one pope has given free vent to the vengeance of his nephews."

In proof of similar horrors, I could extract, from the unpublished chronicles of the past, innumerable examples not unworthy to figure some day on the pages of the author who shall write the *Misteri dell' Italia fatta serva*. I shall limit myself, however, to a single case; one that is related in the memoirs of the celebrated Fulvia Caracciolo, author of the before-mentioned chronicle, and of the lugubrious annals of San Gregorio Armeno. I shall reproduce it here, as it is found in the inedited chronicle, where it bears the following title: —

"*Historie particolari di alcuni successi tragici avvenuti in Napoli ed altrove a' Napoletani.*

"Giovanni Battista Lomellino, a noble Genoese, was in Naples, engaged in mercantile affairs, as is the custom of that people. He was rich and accomplished, and became enamored of a damsel of the Berardini family, daughter of Fulvia Caracciolo, and demanded her hand in marriage. But, notwithstanding the pledge of the viceroy, she was denied to him by her relatives, on which account he determined to take her without their consent.

"By means of large presents of jewels to the girl (which he contrived means to convey to her by one of her servants, who was also corrupted by presents), he induced her to accompany him to a notary; but that officer, as soon as he had drawn the marriage contract, notified the relatives of the girl, who was called Diana, and they, on examining the witnesses, found that Lomellino had been introduced into the house, one evening, as the husband of the girl. Incensed by this to a still greater degree, they found several assassins, who, on Sunday, August 9, 1578, hired a carriage and drove by the house of Lomellino and called out to him by name, and he, appearing at the window, one of them fired an arquebus, the contents of which lodged in his head, and, without uttering a word, he fell dead.

"The assassins again entered their carriage, and attempted to escape; but, the police coming up, they

were apprehended, imprisoned, and confessed their crime; the one who committed the murder was hung at four o'clock the same day, in front of the house of Lomellino, and Diana was placed in the convent of San Gregorio, where she ultimately took the veil."

But I am forgetting that I had promised concrete facts, rather than arguments. Let us resume, then, the thread of my own story.

What is the great distinction, the characteristic trait, which distinguishes the convent from the monastery?

It is the CONFESSION.

In the year 1571, by order of the Archbishop Carafa, it was imposed on all convents, subject to his jurisdiction, to exclude the monks from the confessional, and to receive no other confessors in future than the secular priests. "This change," says the chronicle of Sister Fulvia, "displeased us all; either because they (the monks) were possessed of so much learning, or that we could not be persuaded that the secular priests could, at so short notice, qualify themselves thus easily with the wisdom necessary to the proper exercise of these duties."

The result of this change was that, on the subject of confession, there was no longer any conformity of opinion and sentiment between the monk and the nun.

A service, so simple and easy of practice as this sacrament is for the monks, is not so light an affair for the

nuns. The business of the confession absorbs their entire time and thoughts day and night, concentrates their sentiments, and furnishes to their recreations an inexhaustible stimulant. In course of time, the confession becomes for them the condition *sine qua non* of their existence; the occult science which is learned in the silence of the cell, in part from personal experience, and in part by mute teachings; a species of *camorra*, which has its adepts, its tacit regulations, its chiefs, and its penal code.

Can you suppose the existence of a council in the convents, able to suppress the supreme benefits of the confessional? The Italian nation can well dispense with the proposed law for the suppression of these institutions; at least, so far as the nuns are concerned, for the convents must, it seems to me, in a very short period of time, dissolve of themselves.

Prior to entering the convent, and during the festivities of Christmas, my mother had assigned me for confessor the same priest who confessed my aunt Lucretia. He was an old man, a rustic and a scold; but, at heart, a good priest. Accustomed to approach him reverently and submissively, I regarded him, not as a man, but rather as a minister of divinity. He came to confess me every Monday.

I found the confessionals in the convent, constructed like small cabinets, carefully curtained on all sides, and

furnished with a stool, on which the penitent could sit at her ease.

I inquired why the nuns seated themselves during confession, and was told that, it not being possible for them to remain two or three hours on their knees, they were only now required to kneel at the moment of receiving the sacrament.

"How!" I exclaimed, in astonishment, "are two or three hours necessary to tell the confessor that you have not wished, nor indeed been able, to commit a sin during two or three days of cloistral life? What, then, must become of the poor people of the world, subjected to so much more temptation than the recluse? The agriculturist would surely have to desert his fields, and the mechanic close his shop and convert it into a confessional, and spend the entire day on his knees!"

"We know very well," they replied, "that it is the custom of the people of the world to make a confession of only a few moments; but we not only acknowledge our little sins, but we intend, besides, that our confessor, the person in whom we confide, and whom we have chosen for that purpose, should direct us in all the duties of our daily life. To him we confide our thoughts, our business, and our purposes, — he being our sole friend, and our only mediator between heaven, the world, and the cloister, which a nun is permitted to have. While separated from the world, we find, in the intimacy which subsists between us, a personification of the universe, in

compensation for our solitude. In short, after God, the confessor is all in all for us. You yourself, — if you will only be induced to leave your old and demented confessor who has been assigned to you, and select one who is younger and better able to direct your thoughts, — you also will be able to spend a couple of hours in the confessional delightfully."

"An exceedingly distasteful employment," I replied. "I should much prefer a duet with Rossini on my pianoforte."

In fact I already deplored the fatality which deprived me, among other things, of the pleasures derivable from music, and subjected me to the loss of practice on my instrument.

A young nun, stout and brunette, with lively eyes, drew me aside, and said: —

"I trust you will make no mention to your aunt, the abbess, of the subject of our conversation this morning, or of any future talk we may have on similar subjects."

My confessor came the following day, and I disclosed to him the nature of the troubles which beset me. He told me that in the convent it was imperative to take the communion every day, and that it occupied nearly the whole day. I begged him to release me from such a practice, believing myself not worthy to approach the divine favor without preceding it by a confession. He replied that I must, at least, receive the communion twice a

week for the present; later I should be required to conform to the custom of the convent.

Later in the day, seeing that I had gone down to the *comunichino*, the conversa of my aunt Lucretia rang the bell for the priest to come with the pyx. He was a man of about fifty years of age, very corpulent, with a rubicund face, and a type of physiognomy as vulgar as it was repulsive.

I approached the little window to receive the sacred wafer on my tongue, with my eyes closed, as is customary. I placed it upon my tongue, and, as I drew back, I felt my cheeks caressed. I opened my eyes, but the priest had withdrawn his hand, and, thinking I had been deceived, I gave it no more attention.

On the next occasion, forgetful of what had occurred before, I received the sacrament with closed eyes again, according to precept. This time I distinctly felt my chin caressed, and, on opening my eyes suddenly, I found the priest gazing rudely upon me, with a sensual smile on his face.

There could be no longer any doubt; these overtures were not the result of accident!

The daughter of Eve is endowed with a greater degree of curiosity than man. It occurred to me to place myself in a contiguous apartment, where I could observe if this libertine priest was accustomed to take similar liberties with the nuns. I did so, and was fully convinced that the old, only, left him without being ca-

ressed. All the others allowed him to do with them as he pleased; and even, in taking leave of him, did so with the utmost reverence.

"Is this the respect," said I, to myself, "that the ministers and the 'spouses of Christ' have for the sacrament of the Eucharist? Shall the poor novice be permitted to leave the world and to learn in this school such lessons in politeness and chastity?"

The sphere of my isolation was meanwhile contracting every day. My perseverance, in declaring that I would never take the veil, was a source of irritation to the sisters. They unanimously agreed, and declared it to be the fault of my confessor, who, they said, did not know what means to employ to induce me to embrace the life of the cloister.

"No, he is not suited to you," they said, "and the proof patent of his incapacity is seen by the very short time he remains with you in the confessional. He listens to you, but does not talk himself; then, without any spontaneous activity, he remains in a state of mere passive attention. Has he, for example, ever explained to you the difference between leading the life of the worldly, the greater part of whom fall into the shades of eternal darkness, and that of the *religieuses*, nearly all of whom are saved?"

Indeed, the nuns gave me no peace; this one exhorted me, and another catechised me, all drawing their

arguments from the most boorish superstitions, and using the most barbarous vernacular, with which to exorcise the malign spirit which inspired me with an insurmountable aversion to their society. One of the most fanatical among them, called Maddalena, came every evening to the room of my aunt Lucretia, with the determination to convert me at all hazards. Finding that the assaults of her sophisticated logic were unfruitful, she finally said: —

"Will you grant me a favor?"

"Let me know what it is?" I replied.

"My confessor will come to-morrow. He is a canonico, and has the learning of San Tommaso d' Aquinas, and the virtue of Francesco Caracciolo, your progenitor. One conference with him will be sufficient, I am sure, to expel from you that obstinacy which inspires you with such an aversion to take the veil."

"Well, what must I say to him?"

"State to him the reasons you have for abhorring the monastic life, and you shall hear his answers."

Perceiving that I had no intention to surrender, she added: "Do you know that God, having once separated you from the world, in order to give you this opportunity to enter into his Holy Refuge, has given you a proof of his goodness, of which many other young ladies, who are your equals in society, cannot profit? He will one day call you to account for the disdain you now show for all these immense benefits. On the other hand, if

you seek counsel of the servants of God, and your opinions still remain unchanged, you will have purged your mind from any scruples, and he will not reproach you for any negligence."

Arguments like these, repeated every evening with increasing fervor and loquacity; the oppressive atmosphere of the cloister; my youth, and ignorance of the priestly and monastical imposture; and finally, the training I had received at home, which rendered me docile to my superiors, and civil to everybody, induced me to yield to her earnest entreaties.

The following morning Maddalena, delighted with her success, led me to her reverend confessor. The exaltation of this nun seemed a reassuring index to me. If, in her relations with this priest, there had been anything of an equivocal character, would she have been so willing and so anxious that I should participate in her happiness?

"Are you not curious to experience the effects of an efficacious confession?" she asked me, some moments before introducing me into the cabinet.

"Curious in a superlative degree!" I answered, smiling.

In fact, my situation seemed to me similar to that of one who has been buried alive, and who, roused from his trance, goes groping about among the gloomy catacombs where he is confined, in search of some road of escape.

The canonico was a man of fifty years of age, with a countenance of great expression and mobility of feature. If he was not a Jesuit, no one could be more worthy to become one. After many salutations and compliments, he inquired my name, age, condition, and other similar particulars. Then, laying one of his legs over the other, and rubbing his hands, he said: —

"I suppose, signorina, that you have already determined to become a nun?"

"No, reverend."

"And why not?"

"Because the cloister oppresses me excessively."

"In a little time you will become habituated to this sweet prison to such a degree that you will not willingly leave it. Have you not, then, entered the convent from choice?"

"No, I am forced to it by my mother."

"Ah! forced by mamma." (Brief pause, during which the priest seemed to be immersed in profound meditation.) "Tell me, signorina, have you been in love?"

"Twice."

"What was the object of your love?"

"To marry the persons loved."

"This, and nothing else. Will you open your heart to me without reserve?"

"I had no other object than matrimony."

"Have you ever sent letters to your lovers, or received any from them?"

"Never." (I remembered the billet of Domenico.)

"Have you had no verbal ambassadors?"

"No."

"How then did your love affairs terminate?"

"I was forsaken by my lovers."

"And your mother?"

"She was enraged that I was disposed to keep faith with my second lover."

"Behold, then, my daughter," he exclaimed, "the difference between a wordly spouse and a heavenly one. The former have abandoned you, though you love them, while the latter has followed you, and faithfully follows you, while you care nothing for him and persist in repulsing him. The former have made a plaything of your existence, have courted the chalice of your youth; the latter would heap on you unutterable joys; he opens the doors of his house to you, introduces you to his family, embraces you in his arms with tenderness, and anxiously awaits you to make you forget, in the sublime comforts of his love, the discords of men."

He continued a long time after this fashion, playing upon the same pipe, which was terribly tedious, and as I thought stupid. Finally, I interrupted him as follows: —

"Is it, or is it not true, that man was created for humanity? If, as you say, the family of Christ be restricted to this little community, why was the Son of God crucified for the salvation of the whole human race? It

has been said that to be contented with solitude, it is necessary to be either God or brute. Now, your reverence, I have not yet arrived at the elevation of the Deity, nor yet to the condition of the brute. I love the world and take pleasure in the society of my friends. Besides, I do not believe that you yourself have a horror of human society; because, if it were so, would you not, ere this, have become a monk, at least, if not an anchorite of the Thebaid!"

"To these queries," said the canonico, rising and taking up his hat, "I will give you an answer at our next conference. Will you promise me to return again to confess to me?"

I was obliged to reply affirmatively. I was now, besides, anxious to experiment with the renowned persuasive abilities of this much-lauded canonico.

Two days subsequently, he called me to him to say that he had been inspired in his prayers by the Holy Spirit, that he, himself, and no other ought to confess me. He intimated, too, that I should address a note to my old confessor, thanking him for the charity (in the monastic glossary, *far la carità*, signifies confessing), and inform him that I had provided myself with a new confessor. I resisted this course; but the canonico, declaring that the virtue most dear to God is that of obedience to the cross, forbade me to go out of the room before promising him that I would send the letter imme-

diately after I retired, and it was finally written, though not without much grief on my part.

Now, if the change of confessor was a source of annoyance to me, it was not less the occasion of furious indignation to Maddalena, who, desirous to extol the portentous eloquence of her own confessor, was, however, very far from imagining that my conversion would demand more than one confession. I met her in the afternoon and, on seeing me, she became perfectly livid in the face and rudely turning her back upon me, muttering I know not what, uncourteously turned upon her heel and hurried away.

"Maddalena behaves strangely," said another nun, who approached me soon after, who was also a friend of hers; "did she not force her confessor upon you? and now she is crying and desperate with jealousy."

"Jealousy!" I exclaimed, unable to restrain my laughter. "Jealous of whom?"

"The canonico, it seems, shows less attention to her now than to you; and you have discharged your old confessor to become the penitent of the canonico."

I was stupefied. Not being able to recall the old priest now that my letter had been sent to him, I wrote another to the canonico, in which I told him that, not having any intention to make enemies in the convent, I should provide myself with a new confessor.

An hour later I heard the bell of the portress strike six times, which was the summons for me, and going to

see what was the occasion, I found the canonico in the parlatorio.

"You have sent me my dismissal already," he said, laughing.

"Yes," I replied, "I certainly do not desire to be a cause of discord in the convent during the brief time I shall remain here; and having no intention, either, of being discourteous towards any one, I will not give to others any occasion to treat me with impertinence."

"The fact is," added he, still laughing, "I do not design to say anything about your letter to any one; and to exempt you from all molestation on that account, I will announce to Maddalena that I do not wish to confess her any longer, and she will then have no further occasion to exercise her ingenuity to discover whether I feel any affection for you or not. Mine be the sacred duty to conduct to the sheepfold the young lamb assigned by God to me, which has lost its way. I am not permitted to abandon you."

"I cannot understand," I said, with some seriousness, "how jealousy can insinuate itself into the sacrament of confession, nor does it become me to inquire into the causes of this unqualifiable association. I can only tell you, that if you decline to confess Maddalena any longer it will only cause a still stronger persecution against me. I am determined, therefore, that from this time forth, I will not go to the confessional at all."

"Then," said he, laying aside his mirth, and as-

suming a serious tone, "I will employ another expedient."

Saying this, he left me, in doubt what it was he proposed to do.

Having, meanwhile, determined not to be driven from my position, I prayed my aunt, the abbess, to procure me another confessor, taking care that he should be an old man, and that he should have no other penitent in the convent. She willingly undertook the charge, for she was much grieved to see me placed in so embarrassing a situation without any fault of my own.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, when I heard a great noise in the corridor. I went out and found Maddalena in the centre of a group of nuns and novices, where she had just arrived and was showing them a letter which she had just received. They were all talking, or I might more properly say screaming, together, with the most extravagant gesticulations, reminding one of the witch-scene in Macbeth.

An affair of confession is oftentimes for the nuns what an affair of state is for a ministry — a *casus belli*.

I readily understood that it could be nothing else she was showing than the letter of the canonico, and from the bottom of my heart, I cursed the moment which had brought me into this holy pandemonium.

The noise went on increasing; the whole community of nuns assembled; in the confusion of the revolt, but

one single word could be distinguished, and that, a thousand times repeated, was the word "canonico."

Meanwhile the old abbess, leaning upon the arm of one of the educande, came up to the scene of the riot to appease Maddalena, and promised her that the canonico should no longer confess her niece and that she herself would find another confessor for her.

"Will you give me your word for that?" cried the infuriated Maddalena, whilst the seventy other mouths around her remained closed, awaiting in silence the answer.

"Hold me pledged," replied the abbess.

"Brava! brava!" exclaimed the nuns in chorus. "It was insupportable to see him shut up in the confessional with another."

And congratulating Maddalena on the recovery of her rights, they went away crying, "Justice is done at last! You may now be happy again!"

From this singular scene which will never be obliterated from my memory, I began to be convinced that the anxiety of the penitents for their confessors and the confessors for their penitents had its origin in certain sentiments not altogether conformable to the evangelical precept, "*Love thy neighbor as thyself.*"

But this affair was not destined to terminate here. The argument of my confession had been written out, that it might receive solution by the eminent authority of the Roman apostolic church!

The following morning I was summoned to the parlatorio. Who do you suppose was inquiring for me? It was Monsignore the Vicar! What could he want of me?

He came to say to me, that the canonico had been to him and had recounted the circumstances which had taken place between Maddalena and myself, and he, in his capacity of head of the Neapolitan church, had deemed it to be his duty to assign the canonico to me for a confessor and refuse him to Maddalena. To complete the comedy, the sanction of the Pope was not long wanting.

My protests and my tears were of no avail. My aunt scolded me, affirming that the commands of the vicar must be obeyed without question or reply.

I ascended to my room and wrote a long letter to my mother, recounting to her the whole story, and reminding her that at the end of the second month I hoped she would redeem her promise and take me out of the convent without a day's delay.

Having entitled this chapter "Scenes and Customs," I will include in it some incidental matters which relate to this branch of my subject. They are events or facts which occurred either under my own observation in one of the four convents in which I lived, or which have been related to me from the experience of others who have resided in other Neapolitan convents. I shall do

the same when I come to write of the three vows of the humility, chastity, and poverty of the nuns. I adopt this course in order not to be obliged to return frequently to the same argument.

The fanatical passion of the nuns for the priests and monks exceeds belief. That which especially renders their incarceration endurable is the illimitable opportunity they enjoy of seeing and corresponding with the persons with whom they are in love. This freedom localizes them and identifies them with the convent so closely, that they are unhappy, when on account of any serious illness, or while preparing to take the veil, they are obliged to pass some months in the bosoms of their own families, in company with their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters; it not being presumable that these relatives would permit a young girl to pass many hours each day in a mysterious colloquy with a priest or monk, and maintain with him this continual correspondence. This is a liberty which they can enjoy in the convent only.

Many are the hours which the cloistered Heloise spends in the confessional, in agreeable pastime with her Abelard in cassock. It is only a pity that they do not understand a syllable of Latin!

Others, whose confessors happen to be old, have in addition a spiritual director, with whom they amuse themselves a long time every day, *tête-à-tête*, in the par-

latorio. When this is not enough, they find opportunities to simulate an illness, in order to have him alone with them in their own rooms!

There are others again, who, without the intervention of their confessors, dare not even make out a list of their own dirty clothes for the washerwoman! I knew one of these penitents who was in the habit of seeing her confessor three times a day; in the morning he brought her food for her dinner; later, coming to mass in the church, the penitent served him with coffee and biscuit; and, after dinner, they were always together again till a late hour, in order to make out (as she said) the account of what he had spent for her in the morning. Not content with so many daily conferences, they kept up a constant correspondence by letter.

Another nun had loved a priest ever since he had served in the church as an acolyte. Arriving at the priesthood he was made sacristan; but his companions denouncing him for the intimacy which subsisted between him and this nun, he was forbidden by his superiors ever to pass through the street in which the convent was situated. The nun had the romantic virtue to remain faithful to him for sixteen years, in the course of which time she wrote to him every day and exchanged frequent presents, and they managed to meet from time to time secretly in the parlatorio. The superiors being finally changed, the nun, although she had now arrived

at mature age, succeeded in securing him for her confessor.

Then, to show her gratitude to her patron saint for the favor she had vouchsafed to her, she made numerous offerings of candles and of flowers to her, and dispensed confectionery to all the community, as is usual in the outside world (Neapolitan) on the occasion of a marriage; accepted the felicitations of the company, not even refusing some congratulatory madrigals; and, finally, constructed at her own expense a separate confessional, in order to have the free use of it themselves whenever they were inclined.

A gentleman of rank, one day made a call on the abbess of the convent and showed her a letter which he had found in the street. It had been sent by one of the "Spouses of Christ" to a priest, and had been dropped in the street through the carelessness of the servant. The libidinous language of the writer had scandalized the conscience of the gentleman. A common courtesan would have made use of more modest language!

One Holy Thursday, late at night, I was in the coro, and saw a letter thrown out into the body of the church, which, after fluttering about in the air, fell at last at the foot of the Holy Sepulchre. It was a note which a novice was sending to an acolyte!

A young novice not having the means to incur the necessary expenses of the convent, it occurred to her to have recourse to the benevolence of an old confessor, who was very rich, with the intention of making some advances towards him until she could succeed in securing the necessary amount of money, with the mental reservation, however, of substituting then a young man with whom she was already in close intimacy.

The old man was tender-hearted but circumspect; he made her many presents, but was stubborn about supplying the needed amount of money, having already perceived that she had a great many confabulations in the parlatorio with a rival much younger than himself. The novice was enraged, and dismissed the niggardly old fellow and took the young one for her confessor; for which reason the one who had been repudiated worked himself up into a furious passion, and, consumed with jealousy, stationed himself at the door of the church the first day that his rival went to confess the penitent.

"Prosit," he said, bitterly.

"Vobis," answered the other, smiling.

After a little while the old man died of a broken heart, and the young one, because he was poor, was supplanted by another, less fresh in age, but who had a brother who was a rich functionary.

Another nun being somewhat infirm, her priest confessed her in her own room. After a time the invalid

found herself in what is called an interesting situation, on which account the physician, declaring that her complaint was the dropsy, she was sent away from the convent.

A young educanda was in the habit of going down every night to the convent burial-place, where, by a corridor which communicated with the vestry, she entered into a colloquy with a young priest attached to the church. Consumed by an amorous impatience, she was not deterred from these excursions either by bad weather or the fear of being discovered.

She heard a great noise, one night, near her. In the thick darkness which surrounded her, she imagined that she saw a vampyre winding itself around her feet. She was so much overcome by fright that she died from the effects of it a few months later.

The confessors of the community are selected by the superiors triennially for the use of such nuns and novices as have no one in particular to confess them, from among those priests who have arrived at an age unseemly for amorous intrigues.

Now one of these, prior to his nomination, had a young penitent in the convent. Every time he was called to visit a dying sister, and on that account passed the night in the convent, this nun would climb over the

partition which separated her room from his, and betake herself to the master and director of her soul!

Another, during the delirium of a typhus fever, from which she was suffering, was constantly imitating the action of sending kisses to her confessor, who stood by the side of her bed. He, covered with blushes, on account of the presence of strangers, held a crucifix before the eyes of the penitent, and, in a commiserating tone, exclaimed: —

"Poor thing, kiss thy own Spouse!"

Under the bonds of secrecy, an educanda, of fine form and pleasing manners, and of a noble family, confided to me the fact of her having received, from the hands of her confessor, a very interesting book (as she described it), which related to the monastic life. I expressed a wish to know the title, and she, before showing it to me, took the precaution to lock the door.

It proved to be *La Monaca* (the nun), by Diderot, a book, as all know, filled with the most disgusting obscenity, and, in the hands of an innocent young girl, there is no book in the world more pernicious. In a subsequent conversation with her, having discovered the character of the book, I suggested to her that she had better not read it, and that she would do well to return it immediately to the party who gave it to her. But what was my surprise to hear her say that that sort of

reading was not new to her! By the favor of her confessor, she had already devoured, and even for the fourth time, another scandalous volume, entitled, *la Cronica del monastero di Sant' Angelo a Bajano*, a book which was at that time prohibited by the police!

I received once, myself, from an impertinent monk, a letter, in which he signified to me that he had hardly seen me when "*he conceived the sweet hope of becoming my confessor.*" An exquisite of the first water, a fop of scents and euphuism, could not have employed phrases more melodramatic, to demand whether he might hope or despair.

A priest, who enjoyed the reputation of being an incorruptible *sacerdote*, when he saw me pass through the parlatorio, used to address me as follows: —

"Ps, dear, come here! Ps, ps, come here!"

The word *dear*, addressed to me by a priest, was nauseous in the extreme.

Finally, another priest, the most annoying of all for his obstinate assiduity, sought to secure my affections at all cost. There was not an image profane poesy could afford him, nor a sophism he could borrow from rhetoric, nor wily interpretation he could give to the word of God, which he did not employ to convert me to his wishes. Here is an example of his logic: —

"Fair daughter," said he to me one day, "knowest thou who God truly is?"

"He is the Creator of the universe," I answered, drily.

"No, no, no, no! that is not enough," he replied, laughing at my ignorance. "God is love; but love in the abstract, which receives its incarnation in the mutual affection of two hearts which idolize each other. You, then, must not only love God in his abstract existence, but must also love him in his incarnation, that is, in the exclusive love of a man who adores you; *quod Deus est amor, nec colitur, nisi amando.*"

"Then," I replied, "a woman who adores her own lover would adore divinity itself?"

"Assuredly," reiterated the priest, over and over again, taking courage from my remark, and chuckling at what seemed to him to be the effect of his catechism.

"In that case," said I, hastily, "I should select for my lover rather a man of the world than a priest."

"God preserve you, my daughter! God preserve you from that sin," added my interlocutor, apparently frightened. "To love a man of the world, a sinner, a wretch, an unbeliever, an infidel! Why, you would go immediately to hell. The love of a priest is a sacred love, while that of the profane is infamy; the faith of a priest emanates from that granted to the Holy Church, while that of the profane is false, false as is the vanity of the century. The priest purifies his affection daily,

in communion with the Holy Spirit; the man of the world (if he ever knows love at all) sweeps the muddy crossings of the street with it day and night."

"But it is the heart, as well as the conscience, which prompts me to fly from the priests," I replied.

"Well, if you will not love me because I am your confessor, I will find means to assist you to get rid of your scruples. We will place the name of Jesus Christ before all our affectionate demonstrations, and thus our love will be a grateful offering to the Lord, and will ascend fragrant with perfume to heaven, like the smoke of the incense of the sanctuary. Say to me, for example: I love you in Jesus Christ; this night I dreamed of you in Jesus Christ; and you will have a tranquil conscience, because, in doing this, you will sanctify every transport."

Several circumstances, not indicated here, by the way, compelled me to come in frequent contact with this priest afterwards, and I do not, therefore, give his name.

Of a very respectable monk, respectable alike for his age and his moral character, I inquired what signified the prefixing the name of Jesus Christ to amorous apostrophes.

"It is," said he, "an expression used by a horrible sect, and one, unfortunately, only too numerous, which thus, abusing the name of our Lord, permits to its members the most unbridled licentiousness."

CHAPTER IX.

THE MIRACULOUS BELL.

I put on the dress of the educanda — Endeavor to hold my mother to her promise to take me out of the convent — My confessor and the nuns solicitous to retain me — Ridiculous stories told to persuade or frighten me to remain — They address me anonymous letters — Nervous condition superinduced by these annoyances — I hear the miraculous bell — The convent in confusion — The nuns declare it to be the bell of Saint Benedetto calling me — I leave the convent — Letters from my sisters at Reggio — They tell me that my mother is about to marry again, and no other home offering to me, I am persuaded to return to the convent — The die cast — The fatal YES! — I am received at the convent with the ringing of bells and the firing of mortaletti — Reflections — Interview with my aunt, the abbess — Final determination to sacrifice myself — Newspaper announcement of the fact — Ceremony of taking the white veil — Protest of the English gentleman against cutting off my hair.

On the 21st of March, the day dedicated to Saint Benedetto, I assumed the habit of the educanda. The nuns did not insist on my putting on this costume before, on account of the recent death of my father, in respect for whose memory I had worn mourning.

The ceremony of taking this dress is very simple. The tunic, lying in a glove box, was brought into the church and deposited upon the altar of San Benedetto. Then the canonico said mass, blessed the dress, and I put it on.

It was made of ordinary woollen material, with sleeves close-fitting at the wrists, and a little hood suspended on the back; an apron of white muslin, and for the neck

a handkerchief of the same material. My hair was dressed in the plainest manner to cover my ears and was kept up by a comb. This manner of dressing the hair and the heavy shoes I was compelled to wear, occasioned me the greatest displeasure and discomfort.

The mass being finished, the canonico went up to the parlatorio to see me in my new dress and congratulated me on my appearance.

But the arguments of my confessor had not succeeded in dissuading me from the design of leaving the convent, and his assiduity in repeating them, two or three times a week, far from inspiring me with any desire to embrace the monastic life, only added disgust to my repugnance for it.

I did not neglect, meanwhile, to write to my mother, indefatigably supplicating her to keep her promise to me; but her answers were only weak responses to my desires. In the month of March, she said that one of her little daughters was ill; in April, referring to the death of aunt Lucretia, which had recently occurred, she said it would not appear well for me to leave my aunt, the abbess, thus soon; in the month of May she neglected to reply to my letters at all; and in June, I was myself taken ill. General Salluzzi, Josephine, and one of my elder sisters, who was then in Naples, unanimously resented this neglect on the part of my mother, in a letter to her. She replied that she was unable to come to Naples herself, but that a lady friend

of hers, of Messina, was then in Naples, and would return soon, and that she would take charge of me and accompany me on the voyage to Messina; and that she would meet me at that place, herself.

The receipt of this letter overwhelmed me with joy! To return to Reggio; to recover my liberty; to see Domenico again! It brought to my mind the sigh of Dante,

> "Libertà *vo* cercando, ch'è sì cara,
> Come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta." *

My confessor discovering the state of my feelings, declared it sinful; the nuns called me ungrateful to God, to San Benedetto, and to them; and during all the time that the Messina lady remained in Naples, they completely exhausted their repertory of absurd stories about a person who fell into damnation for not having listened to the voice of God, who called her to the cloister; about a *Bambino* (infant) of wood, which stood with its little foot raised in the act of giving a kick to M. C., an educanda who had left the convent; of some blows given by the statuetta of San Benedetto on the pavement in its niche; of the apparitions of souls in purgatory; of witches; of vampyres; of demons; and, in short, of everything absurd and altogether new to me. I was tormented with similar fables, properly, rather

* Liberty I am seeking; what is so dear, he only knows who for her sake refuses life.

du bon vieux temps of the Crusades, than belonging to our own day; not less calculated to demoralize the mind than to debase the conscience and the heart, and I had ample reason to pray Heaven to preserve to me the use of my poor reason.

Meanwhile the day of my liberation was approaching. Two days prior to that destined as the one on which I was to take leave of the convent, as I fondly hoped forever, a letter was brought to me. I opened it; it was anonymous and began with this phrase: — "*Read it at the foot of the crucifix.*"

The writer represented himself as "one in whose mind my danger had inspired pity. The resolution to repudiate the monastic life, it appeared to him, was the work of Satan, who had taken the pledge to draw me with him to hell. On account of my long obstinacy, God had abandoned me to the claims of the devil; but that there was yet time to make amends for the past if I would remain in the convent. He concluded by saying, that if I should dare to stir out of the convent, I would be pushed back by invisible hands, at which signs of the divine intervention, if I should not be dissuaded, he (the writer) would be my inexorable accuser before God in the day of judgment."

On examining the handwriting, it did not seem entirely unknown to me. I looked over my papers, but did not find anything written by the same hand. However, I was very sure of having seen something like it before,

somewhere. I asked the porteress who brought the letter, and she replied: —

"Some one unknown to me; who, placing it in the rack, ran off in haste."

In the angle of the arched corridor, there was a little chapel dedicated to Saint Antimo, a saint of Basilian origin. Passing here that same day, in company with my aunt, I observed, hanging upon the wall, a MS. prayer. I approached it, and, examining it carefully, discovered that the handwriting was entirely similar to that of my anonymous correspondent, and it was the remembrance of this which had been in my mind before. I reconducted my aunt to the coro and turned to look for the conversa, to inquire to whom the little chapel belonged.

I discovered then that the prayer had been written by that young priest, who, on seeing me pass through the parlatorio, was accustomed to chirrup, "Ps, dear, come here."

My mother had, meanwhile, directed that on my egress from the convent, I should go to the house of my oldest sister and there wait for the lady who was to accompany me to Messina.

On account of the fantastical prattle with which the priests and the nuns entertained me the whole day, my sleep was very much disturbed at night by frightful apparitions of spectres, of demons, and of holy relics.

On the night which preceded the day of my egress, the anxiety which I felt, kept me awake to a very late hour. While lying in my bed half asleep and half awake, I thought I heard the ringing of a little bell. I arose, incontinently opened my eyes and listened attentively; the silence was profound.

Shortly after, I related this story to one of the nuns, and she began immediately to cry and make the sign of the cross; shrieking at the top of her voice: —

"A miracle! a miracle!"

"Who has worked the miracle?" I inquired.

"Do you not understand it? It is the little bell of San Benedetto, who calls you!"

Half an hour later the entire convent was in an uproar; the nuns, converse, and educande talked of nothing else but the miracle, and already began to speak of having a special mass destined to perpetuate the memory of the event in the annals and pageants of the convent.

But notwithstanding the mysterious tinkling, I still remained firm in my determination to leave the convent. At the hour fixed, I embraced my old aunt affectionately, and crossed the threshold of the convent with a feeling of exultation; and, after visiting Josephine, whom I had not seen for some time, on account of her infirmity, I went to the house of my eldest sister, where I waited ten days for the hour of departure.

But it was already written in the book of fate, that

my redemption was to be only of short duration. About this time I received two letters from Reggio. They were from my two married sisters living there, who urged me by all means to return to the abandoned convent. The reasons which induced them to give me this counsel were exceedingly distressing. My mother was about to marry again. Domenico, forgetful of his love for me, and indifferent to my misfortunes, had dedicated himself to another woman; besides, in the event of my coming to Reggio, I would run the risk of being consigned to a provincial rather than a metropolitan convent.

This unfortunate state of affairs terrified me. At one blow the condition of orphanage, with all its loneliness, was discharged upon my head.

After considering for a long time the critical condition of the situation in which the news placed me, I determined, though reluctantly, to ask my brother-in-law to allow me to remain in his family until it should please God to procure me other refuge; and he very kindly consented.

I determined then, that, when the Messina lady should come to take me with her, I would tell her that she might go home alone. I did so, and she went without me.

But eight days subsequently I received a letter from my mother, in which she expressed great astonishment at my not coming to Messina, as she had directed me to do. She had gone there herself at the appointed time

to receive me, as she expected, and she was now in a fury.

This was not enough. The minister of police cited my brother-in-law at the same time to appear before him, and ordered him to see that I started at once for Reggio, conformably to the wishes of my mother.

"My dear sister," said this honest man, after receiving this admonition, "I have cheerfully offered you the hospitality of my house, and would have continued to keep you here with pleasure, if your mother had not showed so much anger about it; now, as it is, it pains me to tell you, that I can no longer disobey her order."

I was politely turned out of doors!

What should I do? Where should I go? To whom should I appeal? I was in a terrible perplexity: one prison on my right, another on my left, and on every side abandonment and desolation!

"My God," said I to myself, not being able any longer to restrain my tears, "what is to become of me, deprived as I am of every means of support, deprived in fact of my own will? If a cruel destiny moved everything to conspire against me, was there not at least some compassionate law which would protect me?"

There was a ring of the door-bell: it was a call from a friend of the family, very old, and bent down with the weight of years. At hearing what had happened to me, the good old man exhorted me to return to the convent until the tempest which had gathered around my head

should be dissipated, after which there would be an opportunity to pacify my mother towards me. With this advice, my sister, her husband, and other friends of the family, all concurred, and, to say the truth, I was myself unable to perceive outside of that any other defence which would secure me from desperation.

Not knowing then what better saint to turn to, as the saying is, I returned after dinner to the convent. Then I called my aunt aside and told her that I desired to return to the convent for several months longer; to which she replied that she must consult the nuns, according to custom, before she could give me a definite answer.

A little later they were all assembled in the parlatorio, and heard from the abbess my demand. They answered that they would willingly receive me again if I would declare at the moment of entering that my determination to return was not provisional, but that it was with the intention to take the veil. If this was not my intent, they declared that the convent doors would be closed against me.

What a horrible alternative!

My sister seeing my perplexity and my hesitation to reply, exhorted me in an undertone to say yes, for the moment; that once back again that they could not lightly thrust me out.

I was persuaded, and answered, submissively, that I returned with the design of becoming a nun.

"Say so, then, in a loud voice," said the abbess. "Have you finally determined to take the vows?"

My heart beat furiously, and my head whirled, and I thought I should faint. I asked for a seat, wiped off the cold perspiration which was standing in drops on my face, and, in an agonized tone of voice, responded: —

"YES!"

The die was cast. . . . Fatal yes!

Hardly had I pronounced the word "yes," when one burst of acclamation and of merry cries saluted my ears. The nuns all broke out with one accord in protests tending to confirm the opinion that my conversion was the manifest effect of the miraculous bell of San Benedetto, which I had heard the morning that I left the nunnery; therefore they despatched a crowd of converse to the campanile to ring a merry peal of bells for a festa.

Hearing the ringing of the bells at that unusual hour, the neighbors sent in to inquire what had happened in the nunnery; and the reply they received was, that the niece of the abbess had been, by inspiration from heaven, induced to take the veil!

Losing my spirits, and confused by the inauspicious combinations which overpowered me, I trembled like an aspen leaf.

Pledging myself meanwhile to return the following day to make my formal entrance, I returned to the house

of my sister, immersed in the most sombre reflections. She was also much grieved at the direction my affairs had taken.

The sad sound of the ringing of the convent bells disturbed my dreams all the night. I repented bitterly of having uttered the fatal "yes," and accused myself of imbecility.

But woe to one who is dragged along by an inexorable fatality! At ten o'clock in the morning I arrived at the convent, at the door of which several familiar faces waited for me. I was received with another ringing of festal bells and the usual firing of mortaletti; the noise of which attracted a great crowd of idle people. All that day nothing else was talked about but the miraculous bell and my new resolution to assume the religious habit. The canonico jumped for joy and the nuns exulted in it, and there was a continual coming and going of confessors and priests.

The Cardinal Caracciolo and the vicar came also to congratulate me upon my resolution, and in the evening a magnificent entertainment of ices and *pasticceria* was provided by my aunt for the community. In short, to bind me fast where I was entrapped, so that I could not possibly escape, the priests and nuns trumpeted forth the miracle of San Benedetto, and the fact of my conversion, with every possible means of publicity.

To alleviate the dreary hours of solitude which I

anticipated, I had provided myself with several volumes, which I had managed to secrete in the bottom of my trunks. There were, among others, the Bible, the manual of Epictetus and the Confessions of Saint Augustine. I had also tried to obtain the Consolations of Boethius, but could not find it. I received, besides, from the hand of a favorite female friend, another volume, whose title seemed particularly appropriate to my situation: it was Zimmerman on Solitude. From this work I flattered myself I should derive some little comfort, and was very anxious to commence the reading of it.

With what anxiety — after the entertainment above mentioned and the nuns had retired, and I in my turn had taken leave of my aunt — did I hasten to my own room and take out of my trunk this much coveted volume of Zimmerman! With what avidity I devoured by the light of the midnight lamp the first pages! The fecundity of imagination, the animated and graceful style, the melancholy sweetness, the movement of sentiment and of passion, with which the author studies to infuse into his reader the love of solitude, delighted me beyond measure from the commencement, and transported me to the unknown regions of poesy; and I thanked Providence for having given me for a companion, a master, capable of poetizing the bitterness of solitude, of rendering my chains less galling, and of tempering my rebellious heart to the uniformity of the inertia; to the perpetual monotony of this *quietismo*.

But suddenly a sad thought assailed me.

"This philosopher, who, over the fascinations of solitude, scatters the charms of his eloquence broadcast, was he, in reality, my companion in prison? Had he been, like me, by an unavoidable fatality, constrained to the suicide of his own proper inclinations? He, who with so much ardor extols the advantages of seclusion, does he know what it is to die of solitude, when deprived of the affections of family ties, of memories, and of aspirations; solitude, stripped of every germ of love, buried under a thousand restraints, one more servile than the other, and sentenced to a perennial and ignoble sterility?"

I was now more than ever depressed. A hand of iron seemed to have seized me by the throat, and I was strangling. A neighboring clock had already struck midnight. I closed the book, extinguished my lamp, and opened the window, in search of a breath of fresh air.

The sky was overcast and dark clouds were passing, driven rapidly by the wind. At the extreme horizon, some stars could be occasionally seen when not entirely obscured by clouds, and the moon itself threw a pale and uncertain light on the walls of the convent. Some drops of rain, which, from time to time, struck on the windows, interrupted for the moment the profound silence, and I then returned to my own solitude.

It occurred to me then to write a letter to my mother.

I relighted my lamp, made a rough sketch on paper, but, judging the style to be too much agitated, I tore it up.

"Would it not be better," I asked myself, "to confide my sufferings to my aunt?" But she was asleep at this hour. I will wake her then. To go to her room, it was necessary to cross a dark corridor. I knocked at her door, — no response. The conversa, finally recognizing my voice, opened the door, dismayed by a visit at this hour. The abbess was amazed at my distress. After she had sent the conversa out of the room: —

"My dear aunt," I said, restraining with difficulty the emotion which convulsed me, "I am grieved that I annoy you so much; but time flies, and my affairs must progress with it, for I will not allow myself to be surprised by events which it is my duty to foresee."

I informed her then, minutely, of the concurrence of events which had induced me to return to the convent, not without the reserve of an imminent and definitive ransom; and concluded my remarks by telling her that I had formed the most unutterable and insuperable repugnance to the monastic life.

The poor old woman burst into tears, and, covering her face with her hands, exclaimed: —

"Alas! what shame waits upon me in my old age, and in my last abbessate? What will the nuns say? What will the cardinal say, — the vicar, — the world? They will call you a crazy fool; and me, too, for having

counselled you to come back! and the reputation of the convent! — and the miraculous bell of San Benedetto which was rung for you, — and the newspapers which have already spoken of this event. What ample materials for scandal! What fabulous stories will not the unbelieving world weave out of it!"

At these reflections, the poor old creature gave herself up to crying and sobbing bitterly.

Her distress, her resemblance to my much adored father, towards whom I never had occasion for a single word of reproach, — these things agitated me. Seeing that she would not be pacified, nor give herself any rest, but kept continually repeating, "Alas! what a terrible misfortune! What a shame!" I took one of her hands in mine, and, giving free vent to my grief, I said: —

"My dear aunt, go to bed again and be at peace; against my own destiny I will no longer revolt."

She raised her head and gazed at me intently. Without taking breath I proceeded: —

"Yes, I will become a nun. It will cost me my life, which will only be the loss of another unfortunate creature; but I will not certainly, by my opposition, embitter the last days of the sister of my father."

I could not say any more, for the violence of my sobs suffocated me. We remained folded in each other's arms for some time, without either of us saying a word. Finally, taking up the thread of the discourse, and lay-

ing on my head the holy relic which she always wore about her, she said : —

"Be tranquil, figlia mia ; God and our patriarch will sustain you in this sacrifice. I shall pray morning and evening that he may vouchsafe to you the wish to embrace the religious life, and my prayers will be heard."

She then urged me not to repeat to any one the incidents of this nocturnal conference.

My sacrifice was finally consummated. From that moment I was a victim !

The ingress of newspapers to the convents is interdicted. Nevertheless, the canonico, drawing me aside the following morning, placed two journals before me, yet damp from the press, in which an account of my entrance into the convent was given to the public. One of the journals said : —

"We take pleasure in making public a fact which, to the devout of every class, will be a source of pleasure. One of the daughters of the deceased and much-lamented Marshal Caracciolo, Signorina Enrichetta, of the Princesses Forino, a young girl of rare piety, has determined to repudiate the vanities of the world and take the veil in the convent of San Gregorio."

The other journal, the organ under the priestly influence, said : —

"The bell of San Benedetto has sounded again, and this time it has made a convert to the Angelical order Benedettina, of another Caracciolo, of tender age, and a descendant in right line from San Francesco, of the same cognomen. This young girl, who has heretofore exhibited the greatest reluctance to embrace the monastic state, has at length, from having been summoned in her sleep by the above-mentioned miraculous bell, formally expressed her intention to take the final vows. Impious and unbelieving, *favete linguis animisque!* "

Meantime my mother did not write to me. I addressed her a letter, and my aunt wrote another, to announce my determination to become a nun. She replied that she did not wish me to take that step, and for several months she opposed the most obstinate resistance. It was her design, she said, to marry me to a man of her own choice, nor would she consent, at any rate, to my remaining in the cloister longer than until this opportunity should present itself.

"She cannot, nevertheless," added my aunt, "oppose the decrees of God."

These decrees, however, could not be made immediately effectual. It was now the month of August, 1840, and I had not yet arrived at the age of discipline properly to assume the habit of a nun; my twentieth year would only be completed in 1841. It was necessary to wait, therefore, until the month of October of this last-

mentioned year, or an interval of twenty months from the time of my first entrance into the convent.

This time was dedicated by the community to preparations, at my own expense, of *confetti*, for the day of the festa. Meanwhile my aunt, who for ten years consecutively had exercised the functions of abbess, had been succeeded by another Caracciolo, a woman who was austere and rigorous. This rigor, directly opposed to the excessive affability of my aunt, created general dissatisfaction throughout the whole community.

Forty days previous to my taking the religious habit, it was decided, in order to pacify my mother, that I should spend this space of time with her. However, before going, I was obliged to disburse the expenses for the functions, amounting to seven hundred ducats (a ducat is equal to eighty cents); and it is proper to note that my good friend, General Salluzzi, kept his promise by giving me, at this time, one thousand ducats.

In the mean time my mother, returning from Calabria, took lodgings in the house of Josephine, with my two little sisters. She, as well as my other relations, in noting my resignation to a misfortune which seemed at length inevitable, thought that my re-entrance into the convent was of my own free will. On my side, being about to renounce the world forever, and wishing to avoid censorious remarks, I abstained, during that space of time, from going to the opera, from the public promenade, and from society. I attempted, one day,

merely to sing at the piano-forte, a popular air, — one which, once upon a time, used to please Domenico; but it had such an effect upon my nerves that, from that time forth, I divorced myself even from music, and played no more, except upon the organ in church.

More than once I thought of opening my heart freely to the general, and calling him to my aid; but my word was given, — my lips were sealed. He had already disbursed his money to pay the necessary expenses, the greater part of which was already used, and could I retreat without making a sad figure of myself before my benefactor?

There was now no plausible mode of escape. I must absolutely close my eyes and abandon myself to the discretion of a blind fatality.

The critical day finally arrived. A crowd of relatives and friends came flocking to see me in the saloon of my brother-in-law. The men talked cheerfully, the women chattered freely, and the girls took possession of the piano-forte. I alone had the bitterness of wormwood in my mouth!

At ten o'clock I was called to get ready. I wore a garland of flowers on my head, profusely gemmed, after the manner of a bride; a sumptuous white crape dress was then put on, and a veil of the same color was thrown over my head, which was long enough to fall to my feet. Four ladies assisted in these preparations,

and two others were to accompany me, — the Duchess Caragliano and the Princess Castagnetto.

Conformably to custom, these ladies began by taking me around to the different convents in order to allow me to be seen by the other nuns. I followed them automatically, mute and absent-minded. I was startled, however, when, seated in the convent of San Patrizia beside my other Benedettina aunt, I saw two acolytes enter in haste and out of breath, saying: —

"Pray, come quickly to San Gregorio Armeno! The pontificate mass is finished and all are waiting for the nun!"

Had a dagger been thrust into my heart it would not have produced a more painful sensation than did this simple announcement. I experienced a severe chill and my face looked like that of a corpse.

The Duchess Caragliano was the first to rise. Pressing my hand upon my heart, I raised myself with difficulty and kissed my old aunt, who said, crying: —

"This is our last kiss. Adieu, figlia mia! We shall see each other again in heaven!"

The princess approaching me was startled, and said: —

"Stop a moment, duchess, do you not see that the young nun is fainting?"

In fact I was, at that moment, leaning on the back of a chair for support, and was just ready to fall.

I sat down again and called for a glass of water to re-

fresh myself a little; and, after recovering breath, rose again to my feet.

"I do not believe that you are going to be made a nun of your own free will," said the princess to me as we went along.

"On the contrary," I replied, gulping down a traitorous sob, "I am very well contented."

The carriage came up, meanwhile, and we soon arrived at the quartiere di San Lorenzo.

As we approached the *Città dolente*, I gazed out of the carriage window with a heart-rending curiosity at the window-shutters, the iron, and wooden railings and bars, and the other defences of the convent. At the sight of this sepulchre, which stood ready to swallow me, I know not how I was kept from throwing myself, by an instinctive impulse, from the carriage into the middle of the street. But self-love sustained me.

As we approached San Gregorio, louder and louder sounded the bell. Every stroke was a funeral knell to my spirits.

At the corner of the street the confused murmurings of the people who were assembling on all sides, the firing of the mortaletti, the acclamations of the old women on the balconies, and the music of the Swiss band completed my petrifaction. I experienced all the sensations of extreme torture.

At the large door of the church I was received by a procession of priests with the elevated cross. Two

other ladies placed themselves at my side; they were the Princess Montemiletto and the Marchioness Messanella. The priest who carried the cross walked immediately in front of us; the others formed in two wings.

The church was elegantly dressed, profusely illuminated, and divided in the centre by a red and white paling, on the right side of which were the ladies who had been invited and received by my mother; and on the left, the gentlemen who had been invited by my cousin, the Prince of Forino, had been placed.

Of all that numerous assembly, of the many-colored decorations, of the ocean of light, I saw only one unformed mass. When we arrived in the centre of the temple they made me kneel and presented me with a little silver cross and a lighted candle. I was obliged to place the first on my breast, holding it with my left hand, while I carried the candle in my right.

In passing the ladies, my little sister Julia, extended her hand and, seizing my veil by one corner, cried out so loudly as to be heard by all present: —

"I am not willing that you should shut yourself up in the convent, sister!"

That clear, silver voice, attracted every one's attention. It was the voice of childish innocence crying out against priestly barbarity!

I turned to look at her. A lady had covered the child's mouth with her handkerchief. My tears now fell freely, though the fountain had been dry till that mo-

ment. I arrived at the high altar. The vicar, who officiated, the cardinal being infirm, was seated by the side of the *epistola*. Here I, and my two companions, remained for a few moments kneeling; then they led me to the vicar, and I knelt at his feet.

A priest, with a surplice superabundantly embroidered, presented him with a small silver basin, and a little pair of scissors, with which he cut off a lock of my hair.

I then arose, and, flanked by the same train and preceded by the band, which was playing, went out of the church. That portion of the street which leads from the church to the convent was passed over by all, on foot, in the midst of a great crowd of the curious.

Hardly had I set foot on the threshold of the cloister, when I broke out into one of those impetuous bursts of tears which no human power can restrain; and the nuns, closing the doors, quietly addressed me in chorus: —

"Do not cry, for mercy's sake; otherwise the people of the world will say that we take the veil, not from choice, but from compulsion. Silence, silence, for Heaven's sake!"

I descended to the comunichino. The vicar, the canonico, the priests, and the guests were all crowded around the chancel. Here I was led to a corner and stripped by the nuns of my gala dress, of the veil, of the garland, of gloves, and finally of my stockings.

Clad, then, in a dress of black flannel, with dishevelled hair, with eyes swollen by crying, I approached

the little gate of the comunichino. I heard among the crowd several groans, which were evidently provoked by sympathy. Who was it that felt compassion for me? I did not know.

The vicar blessed the scapulary and offered it to me with his own hands, and I put it on. Then I prostrated myself before the abbess. They had stripped me of my secular clothes; they must now strip me of my hair. The nuns gathered it up into one single handful and the abbess took up a pair of large scissors to cut it off, while a profound silence reigned in the room.

A loud voice was heard among the guests, to exclaim: —

"It is barbarous; do not cut off that girl's hair!"

Every one turned around, and it was whispered that the words had been uttered by a crazy man. He, however, proved to be a member of the English parliament.

The priests commanded silence, and the nuns, who in similar ceremonies had seen protestants before, cried out to the superior, whose hand was in suspense, grasping the scissors: —

"Cut it off; he is only a heretic!"

The hair fell; and I took the veil.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROFESSION.

The year of the novitiate — Marianna — Her death — Another change of abbess — Theresa — My relatives raise the necessary money to enable me to pay my way into the convent — Death of my sister Josephine — The holy stairs — Silly questions addressed to the candidate — Consequences of not conforming — The time arrives when the final vows must be taken, and I pronounce the vows of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of perpetual seclusion — The ceremony.

THE year of the novitiate was a year of calm for me, if I make no account of moral depression. The past was dead to me; the future a blank; memory a vain dream; and hope a crime.

Snatched away from my friends forever, separated from kind relatives, whom I was permitted to see but once a month, a stranger for many reasons to the very companions of my prison, I found myself, nevertheless, if not contented, at least tranquil. Concentrated exclusively in itself, my mind created, little by little, a second convent within the cloister itself, in which I was confined; and within the enclosure of my own recondite edifice, where I led a solitary life, I should have been far more tranquil and happier, with a few more books and with my own meditations, if the visits of my relatives had not every time brought with them the recollections of lost liberty, and if the nuns had not, by

their insipidity, rendered the seclusion tiresome. I passed many hours in the coro, devoted to prayer. My faith supported me. To infuse a faith into one who has it not, let him be unfortunate.

On me was now imposed the duty to assemble the nuns in the coro, by sounding the bell, and I discharged it with alacrity. The remainder of the day I spent, either shut up in my own room, or in the room of the novitiates, or in conversation with the mistress, Marianna, who, taciturn and patient, listened to my reading.

This good woman, who was about sixty years of age, had conceived a lively affection for me. Her name was Marianna, but I called her aunt, as young girls, out of respect, often call their female friends of mature age.

I do not know whether she was disgusted with the confessors, or whether she had never had any passion for them. It is certain that she freely blamed the scandals and deplored the obscenities of which they were the occasion. Her modes of thought were similar to mine, and the affection she manifested toward me, — an affection warmer than that of my own aunt, — bound me to her by the strongest ties of filial tenderness.

It was the custom of the convent, on solemn occasions, or on the birthdays or saints' days of the mistress, or novices, for the former to make some present to the latter of some acceptable object. As my friend was very rich, and knew that I was in straitened circumstances, not being in the receipt of any income after

having furnished my endowment to the profession, she always made me these presents in money, using a manner and delicacy in doing it which were incomparable.

She would not suffer a word to be said against me, by any one, directly or indirectly.

The abbess having one day convened the nuns to admonish them about the grave disorders which afflicted the community, she concluded her remarks, apostrophizing the youngest of them in the following manner: —

"It is you," she said, "who have ruined the reputation of the community! To us, who are more advanced in years, these parties, these schisms, hates, jealousies, and envyings, were unknown. You, who are not otherwise rich than with egotism and superabundant insolence, you have introduced into the convent the pest of civil war."

"Except my novice from this number," exclaimed Marianna. "She found the cloister already infected. Yes, I would to God all were like her, docile, polite, and observant of the rules."

Alas! the partiality of the mistress only procured me enemies; and she who most distinctly manifested her antipathy to me was Paolina. Influenced by a coterie of educande, she, I know not by what monastic necessity, must always have some one to detest; and the others, because I, as novice, had arrived at a grade superior to theirs.

In the eighth month of my novitiate, my good mis-

tress fell seriously ill, and my tranquillity was destined, in consequence, to be of short duration.

I had always noticed an appearance of infirmity about her; but we were all entirely ignorant of the character of the disease with which she was apparently afflicted. A violent fever, with complicated manifestations and sinister symptoms, drove her to bed. From the first day, the disease, though declared mortal, remained indefinable to the physicians. It was of a morbid and inflammatory character, but still her bowels seemed to be exempt, as did also the other principal organs of the body. Soon after this, she lost the power of speech, on which account, not being able to call me with her voice, she made signs to draw me to her. Then, with a painful cry, she pointed to her bosom, apparently in search of some relief; but I was unable to understand her. More than once I attempted to divine her wishes. At one time I endeavored to loosen the lacing which held her chemise to the throat, but one of her converse, who stood constantly at the side of her pillow, watching, removed my hand, saying: —

"It is loose enough. You need not trouble yourself."

A little later the invalid seemed determined to tear her chemise from her breast, and I thought I perceived a bandage under it.

"What is that bandage?" I demanded of the conversa.

"She is accustomed to wear it always," she answered, blushing.

"But perhaps it now oppresses her respiration. Let me undo it."

"No," she replied, pushing me back, rudely. "Go about your own business."

I began to be suspicious that she had some hidden end in view, in acting in this way; the more so, as I began to perceive an insupportable exhalation coming from the breast of the patient.

Incapable of compromising myself, where the sentiments of humanity were concerned, I turned quickly to go to the infirmary, and made it my business to inform the physician, who gave the necessary orders to remove the bandage forthwith.

These orders were executed, notwithstanding the opposition of the conversa and the surly looks she directed at me; and it was then discovered that a horrible cancer had eaten up half her breast. Doctor Lucarelli, who made this discovery, was exceedingly angry with the conversa, and told her, that by concealing the cause of her mistress' illness, she had committed a culpable homicide.

Very frivolous were the motives for which the invalid, as well as the conversa, had kept a secret of this disease. The mistress feared that if her malady were discovered, the nuns, either on account of the loathsomeness of the disease, or for fear of infection, would not

allow her linen to be washed with that of the others. The conversa, on her part, was paid an extra salary to keep the matter a secret. The day following, her spirit took its flight to the better world.

Extremely simple are the funeral ceremonies of the sisters. When we enter the convent we are preceded by military bands playing inspiriting music, and the progress of the procession is attended by the firing of mortaletti; but we descend to the tomb attended only by the simplest formalities. This woman had been a mother to me, and to lay her body in the tomb, I asked, and obtained permission, to lend a helping hand. Forever blessed be her memory!

For the succeeding two months, the abbess officiated also as mistress. She, too, was very fond of me, which had no other effect than to redouble the jealousy of the young nuns and of the educande.

At the end of this time, another Caracciolo was made mistress, a sexigenarian, but frivolous, astute, deceitful, and fanatical for the priests besides. This woman, though she knew all about the scandals of the confessional and of the comunichino, was yet so exacting as to impose upon me a daily confession. The canonico, on his part, showed himself well pleased at seeing me more tranquil in spirit. Notwithstanding I affirmed that my tranquillity was nothing but a forced resignation to something which I had no power to pre-

vent, he pretended to believe that I had found my true vocation.

Meanwhile, time was passing, and with it the year of my novitiate, and the day of the *profession* was approaching. It became indispensable for me to have eighteen hundred ducats for the endowment, and seven hundred more for the expenses of the ceremonies, out of which, in this, as well as in the first ceremony, eighty take the shape of a present to the confessor, and another analogous portion was reserved for a compliment to the nuns. Altogether it amounted to three thousand *scudi* (dollars). How many millions of dower to the divine and humble Master of twelve fishermen!

This sum was altogether beyond the reach of my family. Again I hoped that this might open the door for my escape; but, in order not to leave me even this loophole, the Capitolo condescended to receive me with a less endowment of money, which was a source of annoyance to me, because I had already seen what mortification another had been subjected to, because she had not money sufficient to pay the enormous expenses attending upon this ceremony.

About this time a nun by the name of Theresa, sister of the before-named Paolina, took it into her head to drive me out of the little room which had been ceded to me by my aunt, under the pretence, that for the amount of dower I was to pay, the room was too good for me. She was very proud and powerful, rather than other-

wise, in the community, and conceived that her wishes in that respect could not possibly encounter obstacle of any sort. She heard of my refusal and began first to look upon me with an evil eye, then ceased to salute me, and finally refused altogether to speak to me. Her sister hated me worse still, and the other nuns of the young coterie vied with each other in imitating her example.

One day I met the conversa of these sisters in the dormitorio, and she had the impudence to stop me.

"Have you dared," said she, gesticulating not unlike a lazzaroni of the most degraded class, "have you dared to refuse to my mistress the possession of that room? Do you not know that she and her sisters, having brought into this establishment not only one or two, but even four endowments, not reduced either, but entire, are mistresses of this convent to a greater degree than any of the other nuns? And you, the daughter of a soldier, coming here without means, without ready money, admitted to the profession by an act of charity; do you dare to refuse that room to my mistress?"

Self-respect controlled my tongue; although I knew very well that the mistresses of that conversa were sisters of only a regimental captain, and that the Caracciolo-Forino had, since the foundation of San Gregorio, introduced hundreds of endowments into the convent.

However, I could not refrain from acquainting my mother of this affair; in answer to which, she assured

me that she would make it her business to arrange for my financial necessities in such a way as should best conform to the prejudices of the nuns. I also notified the abbess, privately, of the behavior of these nuns towards me.

"What can I do for you, figlia mia?" she answered. "From the malice of others you must protect yourself as well as you can, as God will inspire you. This only I can confide to you, that if it be necessary, living in the world, to have the prudence of three, here, believe me, you will need the prudence of thirty. In the world, the passions, easily excited, are also easily controlled; but enclosed, compressed, and condensed within this pinched-up vase, they explode sometimes with such violence as to paralyze the intrepidity and the calculations of the best instructed diplomats. To guarantee yourself against these, figlia mia, you must arm yourself with a little hypocrisy! Can you set a dinner-table without salt? Neither without hypocrisy is there any safety in the convent."

With the consent of the superiors, it was finally arranged that one of my relatives should execute a bond in my favor for one thousand ducats, and cede it to the convent for the completion of the sum of one thousand and eight hundred ducats, the principal of which, it was understood, was never to be called for; but he was to obligate himself to pay fifty ducats per annum, interest.

The money matters being accommodated in this manner and the remaining preparations made, the first day of October was named for the ceremonies of taking the vows. It was the anniversary, also, of my taking the novice's habit.

I was now compelled to forego my private reading and give myself up to the customary preparations, which would occupy some weeks. The ten days which immediately preceded that of the profession, were devoted to spiritual exercises, and the canonico preached in the parlatorio.

The priests call the "profession" a second baptism, which washes away all sins; the woman who might die at the moment of taking her monastical vows would go immediately to paradise, in the same manner as the souls of infants who die immediately after their baptism.

The shrewd reader will picture for himself the application on the part of the confessors of such a doctrine!

The priests also pretend, that whatever favor is asked of God at that moment will be granted. I therefore asked for two. The first, contentment with monastic life; the second, the restoration to health of my poor sister Josephine. I neither obtained the one nor the other. My sister passed away to the better world a few days later, and I, in a little time, gave myself up a prey to desperation.

Speaking of the teachings of the confessors in the interior of the convent, I must not pass over in silence a

system of expiation to which the nuns in this seclusion attribute infallible virtue.

There is on the right-hand side of the comunichino a magnificent marble staircase, called the *Scala Santa* (Holy Stairs), which has been the subject of a papal bull. Every Friday in the month of March, each member of the community, from the abbess down to the last conversa, is obliged to ascend these stairs on her knees, reciting a prayer on each step. By the fulfilment of this pious act, they earn with each step a new indulgence, and on arriving at the top the pilgrim is completely washed clean from all her sins, whether of intention or of commission; and it is well understood how the spiritual director interprets this bull of indulgence; he is never slow to apply to the conscience of his penitent the portentous *Toties Quoties*. If, therefore, at the washing-place of the profession the sins committed during the periods of the *educandato* and the *noviziato* are all washed away, the *Scala Santa* remains, and is all-powerful to remove whenever necessary, any subsequent stain or spot from the veil, which may occur from the day of the profession even to the limit of old age.

One word more about the spiritual exercises. The admission to the vows demands a preliminary examination of the candidate, which takes place in presence of the vicar of the Neapolitan church. It was originally instituted to inquire whether the act was performed of her own free will; but, as everything else in this world

has degenerated, even so has this. The examination is now only a formality. Behold, by the way, a sample of the questions put to me: —

"If there should come from the royal palace an invitation to you to attend a ball, and the superior should give you permission, would you not feel inclined to go?"

I readily answered, "No."

"If, at this moment a carriage should present itself at the door, drawn by four splendid horses with elegant equipage, and you were invited to take a ride along the Chiaia, would you not wish to go?"

I again replied as before.

"If, on the death of a reigning queen, the sovereignty should be offered to you, would you not renounce the high honor of being called the 'Spouse of Christ' for an ephemeral and dangerous crown?"

I do not know, however, what my reply would have been, if, instead of the foregoing, my interlocutor had asked me the following: —

"Is your heart entirely dead to love?"

"If your lover should throw himself at your feet and swear to you that he would lead you to the altar, would you hesitate to go with him?"

The examination avoided with singular dexterity this archipelago of rocks and quicksands and navigated only on the unruffled sea of trifles.

To meet the case of one who should evince, during this examination, an abhorrence for the monastic life which

she was just about to embrace, and to which she might have been driven by parental tyranny, or by the vaporings of her confessor, or her desperation in love, clerical diplomacy has decreed that she, who makes such a confession, shall be at once stripped of the scapulary and sent out of the convent within twenty-four hours, with the following curse upon her: —

"Go away to the people of the world who are damned! You are unworthy to live with the spouses of Christ!"

This terrible insult, which no young girl would have the courage to brave, renders resistance vain, on the part of the novice, and she finds herself morally bound to that life from the moment that she first takes the veil.

The final and decisive day came at last. On the morning of the 1st of October, the canonico was the first to present himself, and he kept me from seven till eleven o'clock in the morning in the confessional, the last-named hour being the one fixed upon for the commencement of the exercises.

By degrees the church was filled with invited guests; it was crowded, even to the portico. There were several eminent personages there, and among others, a Prince-Royal of Denmark, who was in company with General Salluzzi. He was travelling incognito, was scarcely twenty years of age, and was a fine-looking man. He, as well as the general, was dressed in gala costume, and wore the badge of San Genaro.

The pontifical mass was sung by Cardinal Caracciolo, and, when it was concluded, the people all gathered as closely as possible to the comunichino, to which place I was going, accompanied by four nuns with lighted candles in their hands.

Two of them presented me with a sheet of parchment, on which was inscribed, in the Latin language, the form of the oath illuminated with pictures of the saints in water-colors, and surrounded with gilt arabesques.

It was necessary that it should be read in a loud voice; but mine failed me entirely. I began it in a subdued tone, and some one called out: —

"Louder."

I made an effort to raise my voice and to pronounce distinctly the four vows of CHASTITY, POVERTY, OBEDIENCE, and PERPETUAL SECLUSION. My voice broke down and I was compelled to stop.

Precisely at that moment, a lighted candle which one of the four nuns was holding, slipped from her hand, fell to the floor, and was extinguished in its fall. Singular augury!

When the reading was concluded I affixed my signature to the document, as did also the abbess and the cardinal.

Meanwhile, within the railing of the comunichino a carpet had been spread. They made me prostrate myself on my face upon it; then they threw a black funeral

cloth over me, on which was embroidered, in the centre, a human skull. Four torches were burning at the four corners and the funeral bell was tolled, the strokes of which were responded to by some groans which seemed to come from the lower end of the church.

Shortly after, the cardinal turning towards me, conjured me, three times, with the following apostrophe : — " *Surge, quæ dormis et exurge a mortuis et illuminabit te Christus!* " that is to say, "O thou who sleepest in death awake ! God will enlighten thee !"

At the first invocation, the nuns threw off the black cloth ; at the second, I knelt upon the carpet ; at the third, I arose to my feet and approached the little gate of the comunichino.

Another Latin phrase not less mystical than the preceding, struck my ear : — " *Ut vivant mortui, et moriantur viventes.*" The dead language of Latium pronounces the social life a state of death ; while that of Dante and of regenerated Italy applies the same to the monastic life. Which approximates the most closely to the truth?

Finally, the cardinal having blessed the Benedictine cowl which I put on over the tunic, I received the communion. Then the abbess came to kiss me, followed by the nuns in hierarchal order. This ceremony was then followed by a brief sermon, and the ceremonies were concluded.

Then the guests went up to the parlatorio, where they

were served with refreshments. Before opening the door to receive the usual congratulations, we waited a moment for my excitement to subside. Meanwhile the Danish prince had demanded, through the general, an introduction to me. He was anxious to inquire if I was content to be made a nun, and on my replying affirmatively, he looked very incredulously at me. He wished also to examine my frock; it was of black flannel with a long train, — the last remembrance of the monastic life of Madame de Maintenon.

It is the custom of the nuns to offer a bouquet of artificial roses to the cardinal and another to each one of the bishops assisting at the pontifical mass. I presented one, also, to the prince, who very courteously accepted it.

"Dead roses from one dead," said my benefactor to His Royal Highness.

"Let us go, general," he replied, "I cannot bear any longer to look upon this young girl, so barbarously immolated."

The people went away and the iron gates, creaking on their hinges, swung to their places. Thenceforward I was separated from the world by an abyss, which, to every appearance, was impassable. I must no longer have either mother, sisters, or relatives, friends, or fortune. I had, in fact, abdicated my own personality.

I still felt, however, that my heart was alive to, and palpitated with, sentiments which moved me to live at

least ideally with my fellow-creatures. I had made a sacrifice of my personal liberty to the community; but not yet of my mind, which was mine by inalienable right. Much higher than San Benedetto, the voice of Jesus Christ reigned over my conscience; of that Christ who became a citizen of the universe, the destroyer of castes, of sects, and of one-sided associations; the renovator of the family of nations and of humanity, by the one sole law of love.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHARITY OF THE NUNS.

Charity considered — I demand the office of the infirmary, and am assigned to it — Want of charity of the nuns for an old abbess at her death-bed — Brutality of a conversa — Another instance of the same sort — Indifference of the nuns to the death of one of their own number — Suicide, in the convent, of a young country girl, from cruel treatment — Cruelty to a pet dog — Cruelty to a conversa — A nun attempts to poison one of her servants.

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye ministered unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying: Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv. 34, 40.)

San Benedetto must have been inspired by these words when he wrote in his Rules as follows: "As many as ask assistance from you, let them be as welcome as Christ himself; for he tells you, 'I was without shelter, and ye welcomed me.'"

Let every one, then, be open to charity, since charity

is incarnated in Jesus Christ. On this basis, benevolent institutions are organized on a grand scale; hospitals are erected where the foundlings, the orphans, the sick, the poor, the old, the blind, the mute, the invalid, and the shipwrecked find refuge, and where physicians and nurses are supplied, without money and without price.

True hospitality, hospitality positive, hospitality social, first saw the light in the cradle itself of Christianity, and is exercised in favor of the weak and unhappy whom the world oppresses or destroys.

In ancient times woman was universally regarded merely as an instrument of reproduction; philosophers themselves pronounced her to be incomplete. It was left for Christianity to reveal her true mission, which consists in the exercise of charity and devotion. In England, Germany, or in any country where Catholicism is raised to the level of the century, the *Sister of Charity* assists the sick, comforts the suffering, and proffers her aid wherever it may be needed, even in the most disgusting diseases. The daughter of Vincent de Paul visited the sick, who were old and infirm, day and night, medicated the most disgusting sores, and succored the dying; and, without ceasing to be a virgin, warmed in her own bosom, and protected from harm, the abandoned infant.

Strangers are everywhere partakers of Christian charity, and even to the infidel it is not denied. There is the noble name of *Maria del Soccorso*, the founder of a

pious order of women who dedicated themselves to the relief of poor strangers. The Bethlehemite nuns made vows of service to the sick poor, even though infidels; and in our own day the name of Florence Nightingale has become dear to many a heart throughout the civilized world.

"There is nothing, perhaps, more sublime and touching," says an eminent philosopher, "than the sacrifice which the delicate sex makes of youth, of beauty, and often of high birth, to alleviate in the hospitals that mass of human misery of which the spectacle is as humiliating to pride as it is repulsive to the senses."

From the practice of a charity such as this, rendered divine by Christ, taught by San Benedetto, humanely practised by the Christian clergy generally throughout the world, how far are the monks and nuns of South Italy removed!

Speaking of them, an ancient proverb says: —

"They unite together without knowing each other; they live without loving each other, and they die without mourning for each other."

There are few proverbs in the mouths of the people more truthful than this. The religion of these hypocrites is but an article of dress, — they put it on and take it off at their pleasure, and when it becomes soiled they send it to the washerwoman!

I asked and obtained the assignment to duty in the

office of the infirmary. I obtained it easily enough, because it was a position not at all in demand by the nuns. There were some who were not worthy to fill such a place; and others who, on account of some infirmity, had been unable even to see their own friends for two or three years.

In the course of the illness of a nun, and after death, it is usual to write her memoir, and a great part of the day is spent in commenting upon it among themselves; discussing the question, for what fault God has sent her this or that complaint, and then they consign her to hell, or to purgatory, according to their respective passions.

The rigorous administration of the present abbess, during her three years' incumbency, had not satisfied the community. In her place, they elected the beforementioned frivolous mistress of the novices, by an unanimous vote, excepting my own.

An ex-abbess, who had suffered, during her administration of the government, much heart-grief, died in the mean time. Her disease was a distressing one, her agony long and terrible. Crowding around the bed of the dying woman, the nuns said, in a loud voice: —

"She suffers thus because of the very bad manner in which she administered the abbessate. God is punishing her!"

An aged conversa, who was suffering from an abscess, which extended from her heel to the knee, was about to die. Whilst I was dressing it, the bell rang for morning prayers. I hurried as much as possible to finish, then went down to the coro; but because of the length of time I had been engaged in medicating the sore, I found the services had begun, though only five nuns were present. I was reprimanded by the abbess for not neglecting my work of charity; while for the others, who had infringed upon the discipline without excuse, she had no reproaches.

It is the custom of the convent, that a corpse, after being laid out, should be placed on the floor. It is a relic of Basilian tradition. Four converse are appointed to perform this duty. One of them, a demon by nature, though styled a nun, one night, in the summer season, not being willing to have her own repose interrupted to lay out her dead sister, I admonished her, and she got up and seizing the corpse by one leg, and furiously dragging it to the middle of the room, said, angrily: —

"By the Madonna! couldn't you have done as much as this yourself?"

The noise made by the fall of the head of the corpse on the floor gave me a thrill I shall never forget. The commonest grave-digger would have used more tenderness towards the body of one who had died of the plague. I told the abbess of this inhuman act.

"This is a matter," she said, "which regards rather the conscience of the conversa than my government. Besides, they are all equally inhuman in such cases."

This same conversa was leading a poor blind nun to the mass one Sunday morning. She was vexed that she had been assigned to this duty, and asked to be excused; but her request not being granted, she precipitated the old blind woman from the top of the stairs to the bottom. The poor creature died from the effects of this fall. Another time she struck a poor sick nun in the face because she wanted to be turned over frequently in her bed.

I again complained to the abbess, in order that this barbarous monster might be assigned to some other duty than that of assisting the infirm; but I was not listened to.

There are in Naples an incalculable number of ladies, old and young, who live in the different convents, conservatories and retirii of the city. I should say, unhesitatingly, that there were few families which had not one or more members of the weaker sex deposited, like objects in *mortmain*, in those receptacles of domestic superfluities.

One signora, who had been many years in the convent, was subject to epilepsy. There was not a day in which she was not thrown down by it. One day, when she fell, the noise attracted the attention of a young

conversa, who, finding her alone and covered with blood, raised her from the floor and placed her upon her bed.

For this humane and dutiful act she was scolded by the superior.

"Should I have left her to die on the floor?" she asked.

"You should have called another signora *ritirata*. Let them take care of each other," was the reply.

Not less devoid of all feeling of pity and sympathy are the obsequies of the nuns. A sincere grief, a heartfelt sorrow, the tribute of tears on the grave of a deceased companion, would be phenomena as rare in a convent as in a theatre.

That apathy, which among the stoics was called virtue, among the nuns is the effect of calculation and of selfishness. It is customary to bury the dead usually in the morning; and no sooner is a corpse deposited in the vault, than the breakfast-bell is rung, and woe to the conversa who should neglect her maccaroni because of her attention to the deceased.

These instances of the feeling and the charity of the nuns towards the sick and the dead of their own number will be sufficient. Turn we now to another kind of charity.

A peasant woman shut up her own daughter in the

convent, a handsome girl of eighteen years, because she was opposed to her marrying the youth that she loved. The abbess, condescending and civil to all those who had votes at the triennial election, used the utmost rigor towards the poor peasant girl, entirely unused to the monastic system of slavery, and still less to the unventilated atmosphere of the convent.

One evening, while the nuns were at supper, she went down to the well to draw a pail of water. Not returning as usual, others were sent to look for her. She was nowhere to be found. Partly from home-sickness, and partly from heart-grief, she had thrown herself down in the well.* The nuns ran to the porteria, and called in some men, who fortunately recovered her, still alive.

The abbess, instead of offering her some consolation, which her case eminently demanded, confined her in a small remote room, and condemned her to a month's detention. The next morning, on opening the door, the recluse was found dead, having hung herself with a cord.

In order to preserve to the masculine heirs intact the paternal estate, a family in easy circumstances had put two of their eldest daughters in the convent, and intended the third for the same end. The child lived with her parents in Naples until she had completed her

*In South Italy a large proportion of the suicides are committed in this way.

twelfth year, when she was taken to the convent, accompanied by a little water-spaniel, which she had had when very young, and had educated with singular affection. When the moment of separation came, this devoted friend could not be persuaded that his mistress would part with him. Warmer in his affection for her than were her own parents, who had left her with dry eyelids, he, when he could no longer see the object of his affections in the parlatorio, set up a most lamentable howling, as if to supplicate his mistress to hurry her return. Dogs not being permitted in the convent, the monk-porter kicked the poor little thing out of the door; but the animal, indifferent to the treatment it had received, quickly returned to the spot where he had last seen his mistress, and here, stretched out on the floor, stiffened by the cold, he did nothing but howl, as though he would rend himself in pieces. At the hour of closing the iron gates, he was put outside, and passed the whole night by the door, in lamentations, and in the morning some neighbor, moved by pity, brought him some food, and tried to caress him; but the dog refused both the one and the other. He continued to cry without cessation, for two days and nights, outside the gate; while upstairs his poor little mistress was not less inconsolable. Finally, the nuns determined to rid themselves of this annoyance, and the poor little dog was found dead on the morning of the third day at the en-

trance of the living sepulchre where his mistress was entombed!

During the time of the weak government of my abbess-aunt, a nun wanted to dismiss her conversa, and take another more agreeable to her. The conversa, not being convinced that this was the real cause, threw herself at the feet of her mistress, repeatedly appealing to her pity; but found her inexorable. She next had recourse to the confessor of the nun; but to no purpose. On the day preceding the last of her service she disappeared. She was sought for everywhere, and was found at last, crouching behind a pile of kindling-wood. Her mistress ordered her to be drawn out from there by brute force, and taken to the porteria. The poor creature, who howled like a mad woman, in passing in front of a little chapel, cried, imprecatingly, "O God! let her die who is in fault!" By a curious coincidence, three months later, this same nun fell down, struck with death instantaneously, in the via del Tribunale.

Two converse served the same mistress; one was young, the other old. The former rather stupid and foolish, and not being willing to tolerate any longer the admonitions and reproofs of the latter, she conceived the villanous design of killing her, by mixing in her salad some oil of verdigris. The unfortunate creature, from vomiting, and the severest pains in the intestines,

was apparently dying, and no one could divine the cause. By good fortune, the physician discovered the deleterious agent of this suffering, by making a minute search in the kitchen, where he found the oil, already green, which had been poisoned by putting a piece of copper in it. The appropriate remedies were promptly administered, and the old woman's life was saved.

I should never finish, were I to attempt to relate all the instances of inhumanity, which remain unknown to the laws, and which are committed with impunity in the convent. The people of Naples will not easily forget the subterranean discoveries, in the year 1848, in the monastery of the Jesuits (evacuated now because of their exile), and of the *ossuario di neonati* discovered in one of those horrid crypts. But I do not care to cite cases, of which I am not able to guarantee the truth. I therefore omit any further examples, and pass to other subjects, not less important.

CHAPTER XII.

THE POVERTY AND HUMILITY OF THE NUNS.

Remark of Herder — "Priestcraft" — What the vows of poverty and humility demand — The making of confetti — The confessors always receive the best; the relatives what remains — Heartlessness of two nun-sisters — Of another who hears the news of the death of her own sister — Jealousy of rank — A Barnabite monk reprehended for preaching home-truths to the daughters of princes, dukes, counts, etc. — Instances of the ignorance of some of the nuns and abbesses.

A PROFOUND critic, the father of German philosophy, has said that the examination of the *genio monastico* contains the materials for many volumes.

"A sentiment of tenderness seizes me," says the profound Herder, "at the sight of those calm solitudes where souls, tired of the yoke and persecution of their fellow-creatures, find within themselves the repose of heaven; but it is precisely on this account that our contempt for an isolation begotten of selfishness and pride manifests itself more energetically, — an isolation which, shrinking from an active life, reposes the destinies of the human species, in contemplation, in apathy and in penitence, — feeds on phantoms, and, far from extinguishing the passions, foments the most vile of them all, a tyrannical and indomitable pride. Let those apologists be cursed who, either blindly or perversely,

interpret the Scriptures to teach celibacy, or that life should be only one of inertia and contemplation. Accursed be the false impressions which an eloquent fanaticism can yet stamp upon the young mind, after having for so many ages disfigured human reason!"

Generous disdain! How many of the facts, which I am about to record in the following pages, will be a truthful and humble commentary on the foregoing!

The country of Henry VIII. and of Shakespeare has an expressive word which is wanting in other languages. It is *Priestcraft*, which means *frode pretesca;* and the existence of the word goes to show that priests are everywhere infected with the same vice.

Our language has another peculiarity: it applies the same epithet to the calling of a merchant and that of the nun; it is a "*professione.*"

What does it signify in our day, to make the vow of poverty? One of two things, — either the object is lucre, and opportunity to traffic under the nun's habit; or under the cover of that same habit to enjoy, in undisturbed peace, their own property, as well as that of others.

And the nuns who take this vow, how do they observe it?

They dress, exteriorally, in a tunic of rough flannel; but under this they are careful to wear the finest linen, and, for handkerchiefs, the very finest cambric alone

contents them. On festa days they carry silver-chased rosaries, and sometimes even golden, suspended at their sides. It is true, certainly, that the habit does not make the monk!

The vow of humility forbids them to have iron bedsteads, but that of poverty concedes three mattresses of downy wool, and feather pillows covered with antique lace. The bed-curtains, sometimes magnificent, are suspended from a ring of iron fixed in the ceiling.

They are not permitted to keep objects of luxury on the *commode;* but in a pantry in the wall, out of sight, they can keep any quantity of precious plate, and the most valuable china ware.

They are prohibited from keeping much money in their own rooms; but there is, in every convent, a place called the "depository," where that of each nun may be kept separately.

As to food, they do not abstain even for the day of San Giovanni il Digiunatore. They eat of four dishes at dinner, one of which is always *pasticceria*, and of one dish in the evening, and their bread is made from the finest and whitest flour. They have the devout custom of not eating fresh fruit on Fridays; but this does not prevent them from eating as much preserved fruit as they please.

They have the right to make presents, or compliments, as they are called, to the amount of four ducats a month. The superior may, in special cases, permit

them to donate to the amount of eight, and the vicar as high as twelve ducats a month. If they should desire to donate as large a sum as a hundred ducats, permission must be obtained from the Holy See itself.

Each nun has her particular saint-protector, or patron-saint, on whose day it is usual for her to make a great festa. To prepare for this celebration requires many weeks' preparation. They vie with each other in getting up the most splendid ceremonies, and even contract debts to do it when they have not the ready money by them, and squander their own means in oblations to the priests, in presents to the monks, and in compliments to the acolytes who officiate in the churches and serve the masses.

They do the same on the occasion of the anniversary of their own birthdays, to say nothing of the profusion with which they distribute compliments at Easter and Christmas.

But the principal occupation, the *summum rerum* of the convent, is the manufacture of *dolci*.*

The confection of dolci in the convent is of as much importance as that of cakes in the harem. Each convent has its own particular speciality, and its own particular renown. This one is famous for *sfogliatelle;* that for *barchiglie;* another for *pasta reale;* another for *biscottini*, for *monacelle*, for *mostaccioli*, etc., etc. For

*The term *dolci* includes a great variety of sweet things, which no single English word embraces. Outside of a nunnery the extent of this variety is not known.

a *sfogliatella impastata* of the Carmelitane della Croce di Lucca, the Neapolitan of good taste would forego even the delicious pineapple.

Each nun is mistress of the furnace or bakery for dolci for one entire day, which commences at midnight; but as for some a single day is not sufficient for this business, the nun returns the second time, and sometimes even the third, on which account their converse suffer terribly from want of sleep, and frequently fall ill. More than one gray-haired old woman has told me that she had not even as yet seen the ceremonies of Holy week; never having been a moment free during that week to enter the coro and look at the church.

A monk who, during Lent, had preached in the convent with much sacred erudition and eloquence, observed that his audience was diminishing every day, until finally there were but a handful left. The nuns were busily occupied in the preparation of their pasticceric. Observing but six nuns for his audience, one day, when he had a right to expect over seventy, he stopped short in his sermon and descended from the pulpit, muttering: —

"What is the use of preaching to the chairs?"

In the distribution of their dolci, the relatives of the nun always receive the inferior quality. Did you ask why? Because of the priests, who, with the confessors, are more careful to enforce obedience to those evangelical precepts which teach, "He that loveth father, or

mother, more than me, is not worthy of me. If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," than to any other. They are faithful to these precepts, literally construed, denaturalizing the affections of those women, persuading them that they themselves stand now in the relation of father and mother and brother and sister to them, and that even the life itself of the penitent is theirs exclusively. Isolated in this manner, the nuns become more accessible to the empire of their spiritual fathers, who, meanwhile, quietly pocket the most choice and desirable portions of the pasticceria.

Under the head of the breaking up of family relations which convent life occasions, I remember some cases, which I will relate in this place before I forget them.

Two nuns, sisters, were one day in the coro, engaged in mental prayer, measuring the hour, as in the time of the Decameron, by the *clessidra*. They had only one brother, who was in a diplomatic employment. The bell was rung for them at the door, and their conversa ran to inquire the occasion. A sad message was brought to them, — their brother had been compromised with the government by some affair in his own office, and had committed suicide by blowing out his brains with a pistol.

"Who is it? What is it?" they demanded of the conversa, who returned, looking pale as death.

"The servant of the Prince ——"

"What does he want?"

"Your brother"— and here the conversa stopped.

"But good God, will you not finish? Is he ill?"

"Alas!" exclaimed the conversa, "he is dead!"

"Madonna del Carmine! Dead! How did he die?"

"He killed himself!" and she then narrated the facts.

They looked each other a moment in the face, raised their eyes to heaven, and, joining hands, exclaimed, with the utmost stoicism:—

"Anna!"

"Camilla!"

"May God keep him in glory. Time flies,—let us conclude our prayers!"

They said nothing farther to any one of the suicide of their brother, unless it was at the common table, "between the boil and the roast," as the common saying is.

Another nun received a letter announcing the death of her sister, and at the same moment the dinner-bell rang.

"Don't say anything of this misfortune now," she whispered in the ear of her conversa; "it does not suit me to go without my dinner; for, by my soul, I am dying of hunger."

Returning to our subject, "the vow of humility," I will say, that rare as white flies are those nuns who do not make the most insolent ostentation of their pedigrees. They will not receive an educanda into the convent if she does not belong to some of the families of the ancient *sedili* of Naples. San Gregorio Armeno has been, from remote time, consecrated to those of Porta Capuana and Nido. It was on that account that two young girls, daughters of a plebeian father and of a noble mother, were denied entrance into the convent until they had formally renounced the name of their father and assumed that of their mother. In their wranglings among themselves they are always disputing which is of the most noble blood.

"You have only had a beggar count in your family, and even he was the youngest son!"

"That good soul, my grandfather, was so noble that he united on his shield all the feudatory titles, Prince of ——, Duke of ——, Marquis of ——, Count of ——, and, over and above all, was a member of the Royal Council of Spain."

"This is all true; we know it; but then he descended from a bastard stock; even the young ones of the streets know it."

"The crest of your family, what stains there are upon it!"

There were some who, when a procession was about to pass, would demand the best places on the terrace from which to see it, by virtue of their blood. At their arrival the others must cede their places at once, nor did they even hesitate to make another rise, while even listening to the mass, if it happened by any chance that she occupied a seat which one of these considered desirable.

A preacher who was very severe and cynical undertook to reprehend the nuns for the kind of life they led. They sent to him to say that he had no right to talk to the daughters of princes, dukes, counts, and Neapolitan barons, in that manner. The Barnabite, justly indignant at such an impertinent message, was one day subsequently delivering a panegyric on San Guiseppe, in presence of a numerous auditory, when he took occasion to criticise, mercilessly, the message which these humble servants of God had sent him.

There are some convents where the superior makes the nuns kiss her knee, and others where they are required to kiss her slipper, in imitation of the ceremony at St. Peter's.

As to the ignorance of many of the abbesses, how shall I describe it? A man of the world can hardly form an idea of the ingenuousness with which they take occasion to show it.

One of these, born in Naples, and who was never beyond the environs of the city, affirmed to a crowd of nuns, that, although she did not enter the convent until she was thirty-two years of age, she had never visited the museum, nor had she ever set her foot in San Carlo opera house, nor had she ever been in the Villa Reale! She had never even seen the gorgeous and centrally located temple of San Francesco di Paola. It appeared to her that all that was said and done nowadays, about the excavations at Pompeii, and of the terrible catastrophe by which that city was destroyed, was sheer nonsense! She conceived it to have been a city inhabited by heretics, who had sacrilegiously shattered the miraculous statue of San Genaro in the middle of their Forum; at which, the impending volcano indignant at the impious perpetration of the act, forthwith belched forth that deluge of burning ashes which buried the heretical city forever.

By another abbess I had been denounced for reading worldly books, or books on other than ecclesiastical subjects. Watching me when I was not on the lookout myself, I was caught in the very act with the book in my hand.

"What is this you are reading, figlia mia? Let me see," said she.

There being neither time nor opportunity to conceal the book, I handed it to her, not without a lively uneasi-

ness, however, respecting the justification which I might be able to prove. The abbess put on her spectacles and read the title-page, and, returning the book to me closed, said: —

"Memoire di Sant' Elena. Ah, the mother of St. Constantine! How this poor creature is always calumniated!"

The book, as the reader will probably infer, was Barry O'Meara's "Voice from St. Helena!" I was now pretty well assured that the distinguished abbess was ignorant alike of the fame and name of the great Napoleon.

CHAPTER XIII.

INSANITY IN THE CONVENT.

Tendency of convent life to insanity — Instances of nuns becoming insane — Horrible case of Angiola Maria — Her death — The case of the conversa Concetta — She precipitates herself over a stairway to the ground — Visit of an inspector of police, and of the cardinal — Death of Concetta.

THE loss of liberty, the uniformity of their daily lives, the monotony of impressions, the frivolity of their conversation, and, the greater part of the nuns being placed in the convent in childhood, the very slight education they receive, — these are reasons why at least one-third part of them become either monomaniacs or positively insane.

These same effects, produced by the same causes, have long since been noted in those penitentiaries conducted on the cell system, as it is called. And, if it has been found fatal in the prisons of the more temperate climates of Europe and America, how much more fatal is it not likely to be in the warmer regions, and especially in the volcanic, where man cannot without the greatest danger neglect to maintain his mental and corporeal faculties in permanent activity!

The hygienic statistics of the convent have not yet been undertaken. It would be a study fruitful of useful

results. While waiting for such a work, I may be permitted to contribute my mite, perhaps, towards the materials for it, and at the same time furnish some illustrations which are quite as worthy of the attention of the government as of the public curiosity.

I knew one nun who could not, or would not, touch paper; contact with that material would throw her into convulsions. Her conversa never left her side for a moment. When her mistress recited her prayers, the conversa was obliged to turn over the leaves of her prayer-book for her. On the receipt of a letter, the conversa had to open it and hold it out before the nun until the reading was finished. In order to be mistress of her own secrets she was obliged to retain in her service a conversa who had never learned the alphabet.

Another, when listening to the mass on festa days, always fell into a species of catalepsy. If a current of air moved the skirt of her dress, she would mutter, but never move herself in the least. It once happened that another nun was standing near her and fainted and fell, her head dropping on the other's shoulders. She remained immovable as if nothing had happened, and probably would have let the nun who had fainted fall to the earth, if I and some others had not come forward and supported her to a seat.

I knew another, who, when she was sick, would occupy herself with sticking pins into the sheet on her bed; then she would gather herself up on the pillow and remain fixed in that position, in order, as she said, not to spoil the marvellous symmetry of the bed.

There was another who spent her time in making rag-babies and fondling them on her bosom, calling them her children, etc., etc. Nor can I ever forget two old lunatics, one of whom was holding conversation all the time with Murat or Ferdinand I.; the other, when she heard a drum in the street, would cry out, "The French! Here come the French!"

The last named threw herself into the well one night, whence she was drawn up a corpse.

But the convent where the greatest number of insane will be found is that of the Romite, in which the horrid and truly brahminical austerities practised lead more directly to insanity. This living tomb was founded by a half-crazy bigot, with the approval and under the patronage of the Roman church.

I have said elsewhere, if the reader remembers, that the conversa of my abbess-aunt had made a very disagreeable impression upon me the first time I ever saw her. A few days subsequently I was confirmed in the opinion that this woman had, I know not what, but

something very odd about her, not only in the expression of her face but also in her manner and habits.

Angiola Maria, that was her name, was addicted to the fanciful adornment of her very disagreeable person, insufferably neglecting her attentions both to my aunt and to myself on this account. It will be sufficient to say that she let my bed go one whole week without making it up. I often asked the poor old abbess, who allowed herself to be so much abused by this servant, why she tolerated this half-crazy thing so patiently; and she replied that if she should scold her harshly she would run the risk of being beaten with a stick.

This conversa went to confession regularly every Saturday, and was in the confessional in company with her confessor not less than four or five hours each time. Some days she would spend an hour in arranging her hair, doubtless to qualify herself the better with the necessary humility for another meeting with the confessor in the parlatorio. On account of these frequent and long absences, my aunt was obliged to call on others for the services which her own conversa failed to perform. After every new colloquy with her confessor she became more morose, and treated the poor old abbess to more and more insolence.

I was very fond of my aunt and could not endure to be a witness of her sufferings on this account without regret. I was anxious to help her; but how could I

appeal to her superiors while she was mistress of the convent?

In the mean while my aunt Lucretia died, and left two converse who came into our service. I took the youngest, who was called Gaetanella.

Angiola Maria, giddy-headed at all times, now became jealous, and began fairly to torture the abbess whenever she could find her alone. I do not know what was the occasion, but she was one day scolded by my aunt in the corridor. I stood at a little distance, but quite out of sight.

The conversa went up to the abbess and struck her a violent blow; the poor old woman staggered and would have fallen had it not been for an open door which served her for a support. At the sight of this outrage I uttered a cry, and arrived upon the scene just as the infuriated girl was preparing for a more serious assault.

I flew to my aunt, received her in my arms, and, burning with rage, I ordered the conversa to remove her own bed immediately from the room of the abbess, and not step her foot in it again, threatening to throw her out of the window if she did not instantly obey.

Several of the nuns ran in, attracted by my cry, and on hearing what had occurred approved entirely of my course; but the converse assembled together at the lower end of the corridor were murmuring among themselves, and said I had no right to do what I had done.

I gave my aunt, who was still trembling from the agi-

tation she had suffered, something to drink, and then went to the *priora*, to pray her to instruct Angiola Maria that she must obey my orders. The priora granted my request, so that the conversa, driven from the service of my aunt, was thereafter obliged to serve the community at large.

This happened while I was yet an educanda. Until I took the veil, this woman always scowled upon me when she met me and ground her teeth, muttering spiteful words, and, whenever she could do so, would take pains to avoid me.

But in progress of time her conduct assumed a new phase.

On the evening of the day on which I took the veil, I was told that Angiola had prepared a little present for me, and was anxious to know if it would be agreeable to me to receive it from her.

I replied that I was quite content to forgive and forget, and would receive her present with pleasure.

She then came to me, decked out in all her finery, and offered me the present (which it is the custom of the convent to make at the time of taking the veil), and attempted to excuse herself for her conduct at the time when she had so excessively provoked me. I repeated what I had said to her before, and from that day her behavior towards me was completely changed. Every time she met me she greeted me very cordially and inquired after my *precious* health, and was always on the

lookout for an opportunity to lend me her assistance, and, when I was indisposed, she installed herself in my room in order to be in my company.

Notwithstanding all this, her remarks disgusted me, and her aggrieved looks frightened me. She was continually talking about her confessor, or of her own fine form, — of the fine taste in which her dress was cut, and, from time to time, complaining of the treachery to her of the two converse of my aunt Lucretia, — a treachery (according to her) which consisted in snatching away from her her beloved *ragazza* (girl), meaning me. In short, I became every day more and more confirmed in the opinion that the brain of this poor woman was not in its normal condition.

A little time subsequently, her mental disorder manifested itself in a most horrible manner. She would get up in the night and ramble around like a spectre, and refuse food, and fall into an unseemly habit of dress, and into a gloomy mood, which would last for eight or ten days.

Her madness inspired her with a strange wish, — that of entering particularly into my service, to the end (as she said) that she might be able to manifest her affectionate predilection for me, instead of the indifference she had heretofore shown me. She continually importuned me to send Gaetanella away, and take her again. Gaetanella on her part, and with greater reason, contended that I ought not any longer to allow the crazy

creature to come into my room. And when I remarked: —

"Do you not see that the poor creature is crazy?" she replied: —

"Crazy! Perhaps; but I think it is all put on."

"What can she hope to gain by dissimulating?"

At this question Gaetanella bit her lip, and preserved an imperturbable silence. It was natural enough, I suppose, that she should feel some resentment towards Angiola. To avoid any conflict between them, I attempted more than once to prohibit Angiola Maria from coming into my room; but she, prostrating herself before me, and striking her head with both her hands, and screaming and crying, kept continually repeating: —

"Woe is me! do not drive me away for pity's sake! Rather throw me over the wall!"

Convinced that it was insanity which afflicted her, and which was developing itself, I no longer withheld my sympathy, and took no more notice of the incredulity of Gaetanella.

It was about this time that her frenzy began to increase.

At that time, also, the inefficient abbess, already mentioned, was in power. She had formerly been mistress of the novitiates. I notified her of this poor creature's alienation of mind, in order that she might be restrained from doing any injury either to herself or to any member of the community.

"Exercise your own influence over her, rather," she replied, "she listens more readily to you than to any one else."

"I am not mistress of the insane, and cannot stand and watch her all the time."

"Well, the Madonna will think for her," added the stupid superior.

The case, however, was becoming, all the time, more serious. In spite of the discipline, Angiola Maria was permitted to let her hair grow, and to lay off her veil and throat-band. She parted her hair and dressed it in the secular manner, saying that she was going out of the convent to seek a husband.

"You say I am crazy," she cried to the nuns who surrounded her, in one of the moments of her paroxysm. "No, I am not crazy because I want to be married. Is it not you, rather, who are crazy and foolish? You who, possessing youth, riches, and beauty, and who can, therefore, easily find husbands, — you remain here in this cavern, pining away, without them. Follow my example, you who have a grain of common sense left; throw off the nun's habit and allow your hair to grow."

Another time, notwithstanding she was suffering from an excruciating headache, she threw herself into an awkward and disgusting attitude, and kicking, cutting capers, and crossing her fingers over her thumb, to imitate the rhythm of the castanettes, she sung, with a shrill

and dissonant voice, the following song, in the Neapolitan dialect: —

"Guè Mà, ca cchiù non pozzo
Menà sola sta vita;
Io voglio fà la zita,
Me voglio mmaretà.

"Me faje fà vicchiarelle,
Me faje jire a l' acito;
Guè Mà, voglio o'marito,
Non pozzo sola stà.

"Si già s'è mmaretata,
Teresa e Luvisella;
Pecchè a me poverella
Me faje pate accossì?

"Lo fecatiello a fforza
S' à da 'nfelà a lo spito;
Guè Mà, voglio o' marito,
Non pozzo sola stà.*"

It is prohibited to the nuns to sleep with the doors of

* A translation of the above doggerel from the Neapolitan dialect, even into the Italian language, would be next to impossible, and we therefore shall only attempt to give some idea of it: —

Mother dear, I cannot bear
To live single all my life;
I want to have a lover,
I must become a wife.

Every day I'm growing older,
My life is one of gloom;
Mother dear, I wish to marry,
I cannot live alone.

Teresa and Luvisella,
Already are they wed;
Why, in this cruel manner,
Must I remain a maid?

My liver is forced e'en now
To be run upon the spit;
O mother, I must marry,
I cannot live alone.

their rooms closed, which shows a distrust, one would suppose, little honorable to the spouses of Christ. One night I felt a rough hand passing over my face. I thought I had been dreaming, and fell asleep again. The following night I was awakened from another cause. I felt a kiss on my lips . . . I awoke terrified, and there I saw Angiola Maria, who said to me : —

"Do not be afraid, it is I!"

"What do you want?"

"Nothing. But I cannot sleep."

Gaetanella, who slept in my room, was a sound sleeper, and it was not easy to wake her. I was frightened by the crazy woman, and ran to waken her and shook her. She muttered between her teeth something like this : —

"Will you not drive away this *birbacciona?*" and, turning over, she fell into the most profound sleep again.

Meanwhile, these nocturnal apparitions became more and more frequent; my room was placed in a state of siege, and, by degrees, the insane creature made me the victim of her frenetic vigils. Raising the curtains of my bed one night, I sat up, half naked and dishevelled, to listen to her wild talk, from which I was not slow to learn that the occasion of her madness was the violent passion she had conceived for her confessor.

I now implored the superior for some prompt relief. I was becoming weaker every day from loss of sleep, and, enervated by incessant apprehensions, I felt myself

near to falling ill. The abbess, instead of doing anything to relieve me, answered me with, "God will aid thee!"

One morning, while we were singing the Psalms in the coro, a conversa came to call the aunt of the two educande, friends of Paolina. She went out and returned a few minutes afterwards, pallid and bewildered, and demanded to be excused from the matins, that she might go to her nieces, who had been beaten by Angiola Maria. Paolina followed her, to assist her two friends, who were in peril.

A little while after, the abbess called me to her by signs, and desired me to interfere in the contest and endeavor to soothe the fury of the insane conversa. I obeyed; not, however, without having made her observe that I had already repeatedly besought her to apply an efficacious remedy to this trouble.

Angiola Maria had shut herself up in her own room, under lock and key, and she would not even open her door to me.

I was anxious to pacify the two educande for the wrongs they had suffered, and went to look for them. Paolina, who was on guard at the door where they had taken refuge, seeing me coming, said, angrily: —

"Here is the person who told Angiola Maria to beat you!"

At this announcement the two educande bounded out

of their room like a couple of unleashed hounds, and heaped an unmeasured amount of abuse upon me.

This wicked imputation brought me to a sudden stop. Indisposed as I had been for several days, my nerves completely unstrung, I was unable to bear this unexpected calumny and fell to the floor in convulsions.

Angiola Maria had not recognized my voice when I asked her to open her door, but she knew my groans and came out at once with nothing on but her chemise.

Seeing my condition, she drove away those who were crowding around me, then with herculean strength raising me in her arms, she carried me to my bed, where she took the most tender care of me.

When I had recovered my senses and speech, I scolded her earnestly for her treatment of the educande. She listened to me at first apparently much affected, but soon falling into a fury again, she tore her chemise entirely to pieces, so that she was left quite naked, and then shut herself up in her own room.

The imputation cast upon me by Paolina had mortified me exceedingly, although the spite of these girls towards me was no new thing. In order to recover my lost tranquillity and further to remove myself from persons grown up and educated in the cloister from infancy, and in consequence void of every rudiment of civilization, I profited by the opportunity which was offered by the crazy woman's shutting herself up in her own room, to transfer my bed to the room of my aunt. I knew,

too, that the conversa, mindful of past contentions, would never set foot in that room.

An hour later the poor insane creature opened her door, — she was only half dressed, — and ran to my room, which was at some distance from hers, and, not finding either me or my bed, she set up a horrible screaming; then, transported by her fury, and seizing a knife with a sharp point, ran furiously through the corridor howling fearfully, and crying: —

"They have killed my ragazza, eh? They shall have their throats cut, every one of them, as if they were hens in the poultry-yard."

I did not move from where I was. I heard a voice calling me, but I remained silent. Meanwhile the nuns who were in the dormitory, where the scene was enacting, ran and shut themselves up in their own rooms quickly as possible; the others ran for the abbess, who sent repeated messages for me from the other side of the dormitory.

"Dear Enrichetta," she said, "you are the only one who can bring any remedy for the cure of this trouble which afflicts the community."

"How so, reverenda?"

"No nun will sleep to-night on the second floor where this frantic woman is. Will you not do me the favor to carry your bed back again to your own room, and have Angiola Maria's made up there, also? Then, my dear, keep her near you and do not let her come out again."

"This is too much, reverenda," I replied, highly indignant. "No, I will not do it. First of all, from loss of sleep, I have already a fierce headache; then the disease of this unfortunate creature has now arrived at that state that she no longer recognizes my voice; and, finally, I will not, by doing that, give to the malevolent a motive to attribute to my suggestions whatever the poor insane creature may do in her fury."

"Come, come, do not listen to the nonsense of these foolish girls. I myself and the entire community will be very grateful to you, if you will do it."

In justification of my refusal, I again alluded to the condition of my own health. In fact, I was at that moment suffering from fever. But the abbess, determined to have her own way, concluded by saying: —

"You have taken the vow of obedience; obey the orders of your superiors, and all your diseases will be healed."

However despotic the injunction, I was obliged to conform to it, either from choice or from force, for when I took the veil I promised obedience.

Then I went up the stairs to the second floor, and found Angiola Maria standing in the corridor with the knife in her hand, and declaiming in an unintelligible monologue. What an aspect she presented! It was that of a wild beast, a fury! Her eyes had nearly forced themselves out of their sockets, and were executing the rapid evolutions of the hands of a watch

when the main-spring breaks; her hair inextricably dishevelled, — her mouth distorted, and her nostrils foaming with rage, and with her arm raised ready to strike the first person who should appear before her. I stopped at the door of the dormitory and held it so that I could shut it readily in case she should make an attack upon me. I was alone; no one had followed me. I called to her, and she, turning and recognizing me, ran towards me with open arms, but without throwing away her knife. I shut the door and turned the key, and she began to howl louder than ever, conjuring me to open the door.

"Throw away your knife," I said; "I am afraid of it." She obeyed. I heard it fall on the floor at a great distance, and then I opened the door. The poor creature then seized my hands with both of hers and covered them with kisses.

Her condition excited my compassion. I found the knife and chided her for having used it as she did, and she promised that she would not do so again. I then took her to her own cell, and made her open her trunks and take out everything with which she could possibly work any mischief either upon herself or others; and this she did cheerfully.

This done, I told her that she must pass the night in my room; at which announcement she abandoned herself to the most intemperate exultations, clapping her hands and laughing awkwardly. She immediately

brought her own bed into my room, which provoked Gaetanella exceedingly. She was suffering from the scurvy, which is frequently contagious in the atmosphere of the unventilated cloister. The blood which came from her gums she thought was the effect of hæmoptysis, and attributed it to the anxiety which that crafty and dissimulating Angiola Maria had caused her.

It was eight o'clock of an evening in the month of August, and the bell had rung as usual for "silence." I went to bed. Gaetanella and Angiola followed me, — the last promising, as usual, to remain quiet.

Notwithstanding her promise, she raged, writhed, and rolled around in her bed, in such apparent distress as to excite one's pity. I inquired what was the matter.

"I cannot remain in bed," she said; "my head burns, and the bells are ringing in my ears."

She then got up, opened the window which looks out upon the terrace, and drew a deep and sonorous respiration from the fresh night air; then she took to walking the room, muttering incoherent sentences like the following: — "My husband;" "My confessor;" "What a fine thing!" "You will be obliged, dear Don ——, to do one thing or the other;" and "That blackguard will deceive you, eh?" "Now you must go and administer the sacrament to one who is dying — it is not time yet — one kiss first — give me a kiss before you go away!" In saying which, she opened her arms to embrace the

object of her vision, then cried a little, then laughed heartily, and then began to howl.

After spending a couple of hours in this delirium, she returned to bed and went to sleep. Gaetanella was asleep, also. I was suffering with a violent fever. I arose very quietly from the bed, closed the window, and fell into a drowsy condition, from which I was some time after aroused by an attack of palpitation of the heart, to which I was subject. Perfect silence reigned in the room; nothing was to be heard but the rapid respirations of my conversa. I raised the curtains of my bed to see what the insane woman was about, — her bed was empty!

I sat down on my bed and looked carefully around the room; she was nowhere to be seen. I called Gaetanella, and told her that Angiola Maria had made her escape, and she replied: —

"What is that to me? Let her go to perdition!"

I arose and partially dressed myself. The clothes of Angiola Maria were lying on a chair, and her shoes were under her bed. I put my head out of the door; the dormitory was deserted. I went out cautiously and approaching the poor creature's cell, called her by name: no answer. I then entered the second dormitory. It was still lighted from one corner by a half-spent lamp, which only served to make the darkness a little more visible. Here I stopped, reflecting whether I should turn to the right or to the left. I resolved upon going

to the left, and, advancing slowly, I approached the aforesaid dormitory.

This dormitory terminated by a well on one side and a large gallery on the other. The gallery was uninhabited, and because of its immense size it awakened horror even in the daytime. The worst sort of pictures, in fresco, of anchorite saints and of recluses, covered the walls with their long and lank faces, cadaverously tinted; with long and thin beards; and who, if we may credit the traditions and the stories of the nuns, have spoken, walked about, rung the bell, and sung the mass at midnight!

My legs trembled under me, partly from the effects of that superstition which it was difficult to shake off, under the circumstances, and again from the fear of finding Angiola Maria a corpse in some place in which the darkness would have rendered the scene more frightful still.

I was about to turn away from the gallery, when I thought I saw something white moving in the vicinity of the well.

I was confounded. It was the crazy woman, who, in her bare feet, with nothing on her body but her chemise, stood looking down into the well, apparently measuring the distance to the bottom with her eye, and preparing to precipitate herself down. With both her hands upon the curb, and with her head bent over, she stood ready to make the fatal leap.

I screamed for help. She heard me, turned to look at me, and without any more delay prepared to jump.

I sprang upon her suddenly and seized her by the arms, which were as cold as ice. She turned her wild eyes upon me, but did not recognize me, and struggled to detach herself from my grasp, and in fact succeeded. I seized her again by the arm, which I held with both of my hands with all the strength I could command; but I found that hers was greatly superior to mine, and soon perceived that she was intent on seizing my wrists with her teeth. I concluded that I must startle her in order to save her. Releasing hold of her with one of my hands, therefore, I gave her a severe slap on the cheek with the other.

This blow brought her to herself for a moment, and then she began again to howl. I now took her by the hand and led her without any more fear or fatigue to my own room. Here she seated herself on the floor and continued howling for a couple of hours longer, when, becoming somewhat more quiet, she recommenced her incoherent ravings.

In the mean time, Gaetanella, who, disturbed by the noise made by the crazy woman, could sleep no longer, got up and went out, and I dressed myself although benumbed with the cold.

At sunrise I wrote a note to General Salluzzi, requesting him to come and see me. That generous friend responded promptly to my call, and was much grieved to find me

so unhappily situated and in fact ill. At my request, he then waited on the canonico Savarese, at that time vicar pro tempore, and made an energetic complaint of the manner in which I had been treated in the convent, and especially of the conduct of the abbess in making me the *custode* of the insane woman.

By order of the vicar, Doctor Cosimo Meo came to see Angiola, and after examining her for some time, he exclaimed: —

"She is not only insane; she is raving mad. Call the blood-letter at once. She must be bled."

Eight robust converse were scarcely sufficient to hold her still while the blood-letter was taking blood from her foot. Not a drop fell into the basin, which was held to receive it, but it spirted over the converse and the operator, and fell in copious quantities on the floor. The doctor then ordered ice to be applied to her head during the day, and said he would send an experienced nurse, who was accustomed to take care of the insane, to stay with her. The vicar, however, directed the abbess to place the patient in a lunatic asylum; the doctor having said that her complexion indicated that she would be very violent in her paroxysms, and would require the most vigorous restraints. Being tranquillized at last, and gratified, also, at the course things had taken, I wrote a letter of thanks to Gen. Salluzzi. My bed was removed to my aunt's room again, and I has-

tened to get into it, for I was no longer able to keep on my feet.

The nurse, to whose care Angiola Maria was to be committed, arrived and applied the ice-baths to her head. She was subsequently taken in a close carriage, accompanied by her nurse, to Calvizzano, where a priest had an asylum for the insane. But all remedies proved vain in her case. She was subjected to the iron waistcoat, and in a short time we heard that the poor creature had died, suffering all imaginable torments.

Meanwhile this affair had increased my abhorrence of the monastic life. I was now fully acquainted with the egotism of the nuns, who, by a secret agreement, had endeavored to make me sacrifice my life, themselves expecting to secure two objects thereby; first, their own tranquillity, to the detriment of my health, and perhaps at the risk of my life; and, lastly, the expense of a woman as nurse for the insane woman.

The niggardliness of the convent eclipsed that of Arpagone or of Sherlock. In order to escape from that suffocating hole, I should have considered any means proper; but what grief would it not occasion my poor aunt!

Another occurrence, similar and not less tragical, took place after Angiola Maria was carried away. There was employed, in the confection of syrups and the preparation of infusions for the use of the drug-shop, a

conversa called Concetta, a countrywoman of the aforesaid Angiola, both being of Afragola. She was a handsome woman, of thirty-six years, tall, robust, and with a marvellously rosy complexion, which made still more apparent a large mole on her left cheek. She had a large mouth, furnished with a set of splendid teeth, blue eyes, and the brightest chestnut-colored hair, which curled a little at the ends, and, issuing from beneath her throat-band, fell in graceful curls on her neck. Her nose, being extremely aquiline, alone prejudiced this rare type of beauty.

In the performance of her duties, Concetta was very exact, and would have been an example in everything, if she had not been a little conceited and coquettish in the parlatorio.

I observed that she treated a young *facchino* (street porter) of the locality with great familiarity. In the long and hot days of the summer, when it is customary for all classes in South Italy to rest some hours in the middle of the day, I often surprised her standing at a window, which is on the side of the church, and looks out upon the via San Biagio dei Librai. What I saw convinced me that Concetta was not only not content with a life of celibacy, but was even pining for matrimony. The misfortune of poor Angiola Maria had made a very unfavorable impression upon her mind, and whenever she heard it spoken of, her eyes rolled wildly in her head, and really made me afraid of her.

She continued in this unsettled state several months. It was insanity already developing itself in the form of hypochondria. She would often retire to places apart to give free vent to the tears which oppressed her. She would fly from companions, to murmur alone by herself. She never laughed; and, forgetting the orders which were given her, confounded the medicines she was preparing; and if she talked at all, it would be to inquire, a thousand times over, about the streets of Naples, or about the personal liberty of the inhabitants, and of the felicity of those who can enjoy it, and other similar matters.

To relieve my apprehension, as overseer of the infirmary, I notified the abbess of the mental condition of Concetta, and asked to have another conversa assigned to her place, because she was continually making mistakes with the medicines, using wrong labels, putting bottles upon the wrong shelves, etc., etc., and concluded by saying, that I was not willing to be responsible for any disaster which might happen from that cause; to which this inefficient woman replied:—

"Do you know that you are a bird of bad omen?"

I was silenced, and said nothing more about Concetta. But a few days later, her own sister having perceived symptoms which indicated to her, as they already had to me, that Concetta was not in her right mind, called the abbess to the parlatorio, and begged her to take into consideration the mental condition of her sister, before

it should be too late. This appeal was of no avail. The stupid abbess contented herself with remitting the invalid to the protection of the miraculous virgin, dell' Idria, superiore padrona of the convent.

A few days subsequently, an old woman, who slept in the same room with Concetta, told the abbess that she had seen her companion, about daylight, sitting up in her bed, in the act of adjusting a handkerchief around her throat, and that she was only restrained from strangling herself by the cries which she, the old woman, made.

"This evening, at the litany, I will have *ora pro ea* recited forty times," replied the abbess.

One Sunday morning, before sunrise, the nuns were assembled listening to the holy mass. We go down to the comunchino by a stairway, which leads into a damp court-yard, around which runs a narrow corridor, with a very high dome, which is supported by pilasters. I was going down these stairs to the communion, and was scarcely half-way down, when I heard a noise as if some heavy body had fallen to the earth. Involuntarily I covered my face with my hands, and thought immediately of the poor hypochondriac, Concetta.

I ran down quickly as I could, and found the unfortunate creature lying on the ground. Believing her to be dead, I cried aloud for help. More than forty nuns were assembled in the comunichino at mass; they heard my cry, but not one of them came out. After some

time, one came down, with whose aid I succeeded in raising the poor woman from the ground and laying her upon a bench, perfectly unconscious. I then rang the vestry-bell for a priest to come and attend to her.

Her left leg was put out of joint, lacerated and covered with blood. She had fallen perpendicularly upon one of the pilasters which support the dome, and the flesh on the calves of her legs was horribly torn. She could hardly articulate a word. Two facchini, with a couple of sticks placed under a chair, carried her to her own room. The priest followed her, but soon left the room, for she gave him to understand that she did not want him there.

The place where Concetta attempted suicide was by the side of the church. The nuns made such a noise about it, going out of the comunichino, after the mass, that the people assembled in the church thought the convent was falling; and their suspicions were confirmed by the deportment of the priest, who, at my call, in great haste and apparent distress, left the church to enter the convent.

Two hours subsequently there came an inspector of police and a notary, with a posse of policemen, demanding admittance. The abbess attempted to prevent the entrance of these profane people into the convent; but they insisted on coming in.

"You know very well, Signor mio, that without express orders from the Holy Father, I am forbidden to

receive into the cloister any one whatever, even though it were the sovereign himself."

"And you, reverendissima, you cannot be ignorant that public order is superior to any orders which you can have from Rome."

"You amaze me! In what manner has public order been infringed in my convent?"

"It is said that a conversa has been maliciously precipitated from an upper floor to the ground, and lies horribly mutilated; and this act is, by some of the people, imputed to you."

Imagine if you can the amazement of the abbess. With an entirely superfluous number of courtesies, she permitted them to enter, and led them herself to the room of Concetta, who had now partially recovered her senses. She submitted to the interrogations with admirable self-possession, and deposed to the truth, attesting that she had thrown herself, premeditatedly, over the parapet, because her desire to commit suicide was irrepressible. On their demanding her reasons for wishing to put an end to her existence, she, educated to religious duties more closely than secular women generally are, groaned, and endeavored to respond; but whether it was because she was unable to articulate sounds, or because she repented, she remained silent; then yawning, as though she would unhinge her jaws, she rolled her eyes about wildly, and with her hands repulsed the officers, and fell again into her insane state.

The inspector wrote out his notes of the examination, and departed.

On the conscience of the abbess must have lain the burden of this catastrophe, for it was clearly her duty to appoint a watch over the actions of this woman, who for many months had shown unequivocal symptoms of mental aberration. Contiguous to the conversa's room was a small one, used as a wardrobe; here a rope was found, with a slip-noose made in it, and in a neighboring recess a paper of poison. It was clear that she had been undecided which kind of death to choose, poison or the halter.

Shortly after this, came the Cardinal Riario Sforza, recently exalted to the archiepiscopal see of Naples. He reproached the abbess with having permitted so much noise to be made about so small a matter as that which had just occurred, and for having allowed the police to violate, by their presence, the sacred refuge of virgins.

"Do you know," said he, in a severe tone, "what respect the self-styled philosophers and liberals have for the cloister? They believe that tears and desperation reign in your seclusion, and that all your nuns repent ever having taken the veil. Now, by the publicity you have given to this trifling affair, you have contributed to give a coloring of truth to this slander. If the convent be not the tomb the canonized saints desire it to be, why should it bear the name? The living must

never know anything of what happens in the sepulchre."

The unhappy Concetta lived another twenty days, until her leg gangrened. I did not leave her side, except for morning and evening prayers, nor cease to extend the dutiful comforts of charity to her. I often overheard her muttering to herself; at other times I found a sad smile on her features, although she was suffering from the most acute pain. From some words which dropped from her lips, I understood that the poor creature found herself in a critical state, which she wished to conceal by her death.

"Yes, if death does not come quickly . . . I shall be inevitably betrayed . . . already my bosom . . . cursed . . . excommunicated . . . go to perdition . . . don't talk to me of heaven, and of the Madonna; if the Madonna aids the unfortunate, why does she not come to my assistance, and to that of the being I feel to be alive within me?"

She spoke not unfrequently of a young man, with black eyes, who had been in the habit of ogling her at the window in the church; but could not be persuaded to receive the priest with the sacrament. Abandoning herself to the most gloomy desperation, she repeated over and over again that she was hopelessly damned. Horrid and strange hallucinations came over her, and saddened her last moments.

One night while every one was asleep, except two or three who watched at her bedside, she cried: —

"This place is infested with demons, — see them there, — one by one! Alas! you, in that corner, why do you make faces at me? And you, over there, why do you shake the walls, and stick your horns into the ceiling?"

Another time she said: —

"You innocent creatures, who are not contaminated by impurity, fly, fly from contact with me! If you should become stained with it, alas! three years of penitence would not suffice to purify your souls!"

The nuns, fully convinced that she was possessed by a malign spirit, thought to exorcise it, by sending for a monk cross-bearer. The feeling was universal in the convent that the place was invaded by demons, and the fright was general.

The ceremony of exorcism was performed with great solemnity; but it had no effect. The nuns crowded the place where the ceremony was performed, continually making the sign of the cross, and standing with open mouths, expecting to see the figure of Satan escape from the body of the poor creature; but their curiosity was not gratified, — it was not yet near the *ninth month!*

She would not permit the priest to enter her room to recite the prayers; and only at the very moment when her spirit was passing away, and she could no longer prevent it, was he allowed to come in. She died about

the time of vespers. Her beauty, which had entirely disappeared with her loss of reason, reappeared on the features of the corpse. What a serenity rested on her countenance! And what a contrast to what it had been, till now, convulsed with madness, and troubled by her private grief!

It was sunset. A single ray of the departing luminary, darting through the window, rested for a moment on the face of the departed, as if to take a farewell kiss, and even that messenger of divine compassion had disappeared a moment later!

Her spirit had been set free, — mine was yet in bondage! I stripped the flower-vases of some flowers, and threw a handful over the body, and went to my own room with a heavy heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

THEFT IN THE CONVENT.

Numerous instances of stealing in the convent — Sacredness of the objects no exception — How the sisters cheat in confectionery and medicines.

SUPPOSE a band of thirty brigands, who, after having stopped, beaten, and despoiled you of all your effects, to be holding a council among themselves to decide whether they should not take your life also. Among these fiends, rendered ferocious by their own misdeeds, would not there be found, probably, some one, less sanguinary than the rest, who would intercede for your life? And if, instead of thirty, there should be fifty or sixty, would the chances in your favor not be augmented? Or, suppose a band of one, three, or five hundred. If in one of these last cases it would be safe to bet ten to one that your life would be saved, it would be almost impossible that among such a number there should not be found some one to make some effort to save your life.

I need not seek for an illustration clearer than this to show that vice and wickedness more readily find refuge in small than in large communities. "Woe to him who is alone!" says the Scripture. Egotism is common to a part, not to all, of the human race, and Adam, created

in the image of God, symbolizes rather the species than the individual.

The convent contains within its walls all the vices of the city, without any of its virtues or advantages, and, as modern civilization progresses under the fostering care of free institutions, so do the monastic congregations assume more and more distinctly the form of a tolerated *camorra*.*

I certainly have no hesitation in affirming that there may sometimes be found worthy and exemplary nuns, — nuns worthy of all respect, whose virtues entitle them to rank among the noble and religious women of any age; but their number is so small that they are completely lost sight of in the immense majority of those of the common order. To the monasteries of women may be justly applied that saying of the prophet, "One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all these have I not found." (Ecclesiastes.)

Not even from the low crime of theft are they exempt in the convent. I would never have believed it if I had not been a sufferer myself. It seemed a very strange thing to me to be told, the first day I entered the convent, by a conversa, in an undertone, not to leave a box of dolci, which had been presented to me, on the table; for if I did it would be a miracle if I were ever to see it again. In passing around the building I had seen several carpenters and masons at work for the community,

* *Camorra*, in Italian, means an organized system of villany and wickedness.

and supposed that the conversa had reference to the rapacity of these people when she cautioned me against thieves. After a short residence there, however, I discovered that the nuns themselves were the thieves, and that they found it necessary to keep everything under lock and key to protect themselves from each other, from bread even to needles! If it was necessary, therefore, for the abbess to guard the safety of the lock to the cloister, it was equally so for each nun to see that her own effects were kept equally well protected.

There was one time when this ignominious habit had taken so deep root, that a week did not pass in which some theft was not committed!

An educanda forgot one day to take the key out of her commode, and her own little savings of five Neapolitan piastres (a piastre = ninety-six cents) were stolen. When coffee was served, you never saw a silver spoon, and a rosary with medallions was once stolen from the coro itself!

A conversa was one day being measured for a new dress; she went to her room to get the money to pay the dress-maker; at her return her dress was no longer where she had put it, and she never saw it more.

A silver *piletta* for holy water, which hung on the wall at the head of my bed, was stolen from me. I was compelled to submit to the loss of this family relic, which was very precious to me, and say nothing about it for fear of making enemies. At another time they

stole a large, lace-bordered bureau-cover from me; but as it was known that I was on the track of the thief, it was left in one corner of the corridor with the mark half picked out. It is further to be noted that these thefts were committed in places where artisans or other world's people never enter, and for the most part on Sundays, when they are never permitted to enter the building at all!

On the evening of a certain festa, being indisposed, I retired early. About the hour when the bell imposing silence was rung, I heard some cries proceeding from the lower floor, and a confused noise of going and coming of the nuns on the stairs, and a great shaking of the windows. As a death was not an unfrequent occurrence in the convent, I imagined that some misfortune of this kind had happened; and as, since the day that I had decided to die a nun (or rather that they supposed I had), I had been assigned a separate room upon the third floor, I now arose hastily and ran to see if anything had happened to my aunt. The reader will not have forgotten the old blind and decrepit nun of whom I have already spoken. I met her on the way, supported by her convèrsa, and very much distressed.

"What a horrible thing!" she exclaimed, shuddering.

"What means this tumult, aunt Constanza?" I asked.

"How, figlia mia, do you not know of the sacrilege which has been committed?"

"Where?"

"O madonna mia!" she added, covering her wrinkled

face with her hands, "they have stripped the Virgin del Buon Consiglio of all her jewels!"

"Is it possible?"

"It is as true as it is that we must all die."

I passed into the coro, and found that the little altar of that virgin had been really stripped of everything. There was a picture painted by a master hand, in a frame with a heavy cornice, with a glass door in front; the glass was some six inches removed from the canvas, and was permanently closed with a key, and in the space which separated it from the frame there were bunches of flowers in silver, of highly creditable workmanship.

This lock had been forced, and the crown of silver and the silver flowers, which from remote times had adorned this picture of the Virgin and Child, were missing. The thieves, not contented with carrying off these pious offerings, had also abstracted other objects of value, such as ear-rings, finger-rings, diadems, collars, and other jewels, and had torn the picture in many places in removing the nails or pins by which these different objects had been suspended. What a sad impression this picture produced, thus vandalized, perforated with holes and torn, in the haste probably to escape!

This sacrilegious theft occurred during the administration of the before-mentioned rigorous abbess. The public newspapers whispered of it.

The next morning she sent the superior to call the vicar, inviting also the other functionaries of the con-

vent without forgetting the mistress of the converse. I had, unfortunately, been assigned to this office, and had the double burden besides of the infirmary and druggist, — hierarchical duties, which, to say the truth, afforded me some mental occupation and relief; for I took pains to study materia medica and clinical medicine pretty thoroughly while I remained there.

The vicar ordered me to call every member of the community down into the refectory, excluding only the blind and other infirm, whose condition exonerated them from all suspicion. The nuns were included, and they alone numbered sixty-two.

Except a few who presented themselves willingly, as they were called, the others vented their rage upon me; each one insulting me in her own particular manner. These weak and ignorant women, whom Christ in his infinite mercy has elected as his brides from among all those who have been taken from the rib of Adam, secure of not being turned out of doors after once pronouncing the vows, allow themselves to use the most terrible impertinences toward the choral nuns. One of them said to me: —

"Have you not got two hands as well as I? Who knows that you are not the thief yourself?"

"You will do better," I replied, "to use such language to your equals."

"We are all made of the same clay," she replied, simpering.

I was silent from motives of prudence. It took me an hour to assemble the whole community. Some were induced to come only by prayers; others by threats. In the mean while the vicar, who was left alone with the abbess, warmly enjoined upon her to keep hidden from the world outside the opprobrious occurrence which had just happened, reminding her of the invasion of the convent by the police on the occasion of the attempted suicide of Concetta, and citing, as I was afterwards told, the maxim that "*one's dirty linen should always be washed at home.*"

But very austere, and otherwise severe, were the admonitions which he addressed to the sisters when they were all assembled in his presence. I shall never forget the epilogue.

"Your convent," said he, "has become a *Bosco di Bovino*,* where they steal without fear. There, at least, there are no saints and madonnas to steal."

He then interdicted the thief from the communion, and in the name of the irritated virgin, imposed upon her, also, the duty of making immediate restitution of the things stolen, leaving finally over the entire community the shadow of the possibility of an ecclesiastical censure.

Some cried, others were enraged; one fainted, while

* The Bosco di Bovino is a piece of woods, occupying a narrow defile, watered by the Carvaro, and inaccessible except at its two extremities. It was formerly noted as being the favorite haunt of the brigands of the province of Capitanata.

others left the room making ugly faces and gestures at the vicar, as they went out of the door. The following morning every one, without a single exception, went down to the communion, and two days after six ducats were found deposited on the little altar!

As that sum was not a twentieth part of the value of the things stolen, it was thought to be an earnest intention of the thief to make a complete atonement, and that the balance might be forthcoming ere long. But time passed on, the affair blew over, and the thief deposited no more money. The ugly conviction remained in the minds of the greater part, that the theft could not have been successfully accomplished if the perpetrator had not had accomplices within the building, and receivers outside.

There was another and similar sacrilegious theft. From the press, or pantry of the *deposito* (the general *safe* of the nuns), there was carried off, at one time, an hundred ducats! It was a sum destined to be invested to produce an annual income to feed the lamp suspended before the picture of the *Immacolata*. The thief was never discovered.

Example third. In rendering an account of her abbessate, my aunt discovered a deficit of some thousands of ducats in the strong chest of the community. The poor woman could make no explanation of this enor-

mous loss, as she had never kept the key, that having been from time immemorial consigned to the secretary and other elders. She was never able to discover how this had been brought about, and I know very well that the anxiety she suffered from this cause hastened her death.

Another species of abuse is tolerated in the cloister, and that is the scandalous gains which it is permitted the nuns to derive from profits in the traffic in dolci and medicines.

I have said before, that I had been assigned to the charge of the infirmary and of the drugs. For greater exactness, I should add, that in this duty I was only an assistant to another, whose advanced age and infirmity, however, rarely permitted her to come down to the office, and she confined herself to the transmitting the orders by the hands of her conversa, who, unfortunately, was one of the most impertinent and obstinate in the convent.

I was five years in these offices, during which time I repeatedly protested against the exaggerated prices which were charged for the medicine, which ought certainly to be afforded cheaper than those of the public druggists, because of there being nothing to pay, either for rent, light, or service, nor fees to the physician; and besides, there could be no good reason given why any profit should be demanded.

I one day made the most energetic complaints at being compelled to sell, at ten cents an ounce, an article which I had bought myself at thirty-two cents a pound, — that is to say, at about four times the cost!

Another time, I had instructed the portress not to receive from the peasants, who would probably bring them, any more double violets, which we were accustomed to buy every spring, because I already had sufficient on hand. But the conversa, who was regularly bribed by the peasant from whom she was in the habit of receiving the flowers and herbs, was very indignant towards me because of this order.

One morning the bell rang for me, and I went down. There were two peasants, who had brought in some large baskets full of violets. The conversa had admitted them and weighed their herbs, and demanded that I should pay for them. I said: —

"I have no need of violets this year."

This impudent creature, placing her hands on her hips, answered in the most insolent manner: —

"You are not the apothecary, only the assistant of my mistress. She wants them, and you must act accordingly. Command who can; obey who must!"

"I have never obeyed, nor will I, commands calling upon me to do that which is repugnant to my conscience. Now I will show your mistress my mode of proceeding."

Saying which, I went directly to the abbess, to whose

care I reconsigned the key of the office, and from that time I could never be persuaded to enter it.

I could relate here a great many other similar misdeeds and abuses committed under my own observation during my twenty years of monastic life in different convents, which always escaped punishment, either from the *amor propria* of caste, or for want of proper judicial investigation. The priory, the wardrobe, the store-room, the treasury, and the other branches of the administration, how much corruption do they not conceal!

But I need not detain the reader any longer with the details of facts so extremely disagreeable. To give a vague, but a just idea of the abuses of every nature which infest the convents of both sexes, it is sufficient to remember that under the past government theft and the camorra exuded, so to say, at every pore of Neapolitan society, beginning at the throne, traversing the sanctuary, and finally spreading through the entire population.

Who has not heard of the answer of King Ferdinand to that statesman who took the liberty to denounce before him the malversation in office of an eminent functionary: —

"It is true he is a swindler, a cheat, and a thief; but then, you know, he is a good Christian!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE ACOLYTES.

The young priests patronized by the nuns — Ceremony during Holy Week, in the convent, of washing the disciples' feet, one of the nuns personating the Saviour and others the disciples — To see this ceremony, four acolytes climb to a position where they can observe it, and, at the same time, talk with the nuns! — I am nominated for the office of sacristan — Conspiracy of the nuns to inveigle me with one of the young priests — Its failure as regards me — Its success with the poor acolyte — Final resolve.

With the exception of the little republic of San Marino, I believe every state, however small, has its capital city; nor is there one which does not support two sorts of public edifices, — one, sacred to devotional purposes; the other, to amusements.

Now the convent is a small republican state, placed under the high dominion of the Holy Father; it has its metropolis also, supplied, not less than the others, with its sacred ceremonies and its dramatic entertainments. The metropolis of the convent is the church. Two different parts, two separate functions, every one belonging to the service of the church must know how to perform, — one, that of the sacred minister; the other, that of the dramatic actor.

We have already had enough to say about the dramas enacted in the confessionals, and the dualistic doctrines

of the confessors. Let us now make some short excursions among some scenes in which *i chierici* (the acolytes), are the performers.

Four youths, dedicated to the service of the church, aspired to the *sacerdozio* (priesthood); but they had no sooner taken holy orders than they were required to leave, in order that their places might be filled by others, unless they should be able to secure the protection of some of the nuns, who have the power to retain them in their places in preference to their *older* predecessors!

Fortune favors the young. These acolytes had their protectresses in the convent, and the protection of a nun is worth something to the young priest. Some wealthy Neapolitan gentlemen and ecclesiastics long ago bequeathed, in favor of San Gregorio Armeno, some legacies for the use of the patrimonies, of chaplainships, marriages, and for acts of benevolence. The acolytes, therefore, who had succeeded in inspiring any of the more potent among the nuns with feelings of friendship, or any warmer regards, were fortunate; for they possessed not only the power of protecting them, but they were also able to traffic in votes for the abbessate, and enjoyed, besides, many exclusive privileges; one of which was, to dispense these benefices according to their own pleasure.

The acolyte, when protected in this manner, is certain of securing, sooner or later, the chaplaincy, in which

case his protectress often makes a festa at her own expense on the occasion of his celebrating his first mass. I remember one such acolyte, who, on becoming *Dei gratia*, priest, received at the hands of his patroness, not only the expense of the festa, but also a sumptuous banquet at his own house, at which twenty-four persons assembled, coming in gala dresses and in carriages which the nun had borrowed from her own family for the occasion.

The abbess approved of such scandalous prodigality, and even encouraged it, saying: "I have done the same myself. I can assure you it is the custom of the convent." At the same time, however, in an undertone, she would caution the nuns not to make such exhibitions of their extravagance in my presence, and they, knowing my sentiments, complied with her request. It was on this account, that, on seeing me enter the room, their conversation would be suddenly interrupted, and in sending the before-mentioned dinner to the priest, they used every precaution that I should know nothing of the sumptuousness of it.

It was the custom on Holy Week to decorate one portion of the coro magnificently, to commemorate the ceremony of the washing of feet. On the altars were deposited the symbols of the passion, with all the silver belonging to the nuns, which an infinite number of lighted wax candles served to illuminate.

Shall I characterize this scene as a comedy? It grieves me, in speaking of religious matters, to use this term. But what can be more comical, more ridiculous, more profane to Christian purity, than to see an impersonation of the Saviour, not only in a smooth and beardless face, but also in a woman's dress, engaged in washing the feet of a dozen equally beardless apostles in petticoats and silk stockings! I believe if the Mormons of America, communists and heretics as they are, should, on entering a Roman Catholic church, see the Son of God thus transformed, they would not hesitate to return with open arms to the bosom of the Mother Church! The four acolytes of the convent were dying with pious curiosity to see these holy apostles without their stockings! At a late hour of Holy Thursday, when the church was closed to outside barbarians, and when I, too, had retired, they managed to climb the coro, by leaning the longest ladder they could find in the church against the wall; by this means they were enabled to get upon the cornice of the coro itself, where they were spectators, and sometimes even actors in the drama! Fortunately things passed off quietly and no trouble grew out of it. I had heard of this project the day before from the nuns themselves, and therefore withdrew so as to leave the actors free and unembarrassed.

Eight years had then passed since I entered the cloister, and during this interval of time I had never discovered in myself the least inclination, either towards a

priest, a monk, or an acolyte, or even for my confessor, notwithstanding his persistent endeavors, under one pretext or another, to get me frequently into the confessional. It was not because my heart at twenty-seven was yet dead to the soft influence of love, or because I had aspired to the savage honor of looking upon poor lovers, as did the rigid Cato. No, I was really disgusted with the hypocritical and simulated bigotry of the nuns, and with their always making a parade of some virtue and candor which they did not possess. I was disgusted, too, with the persecutions with which they pursued any one of their number who, by any unhappy fatality, had conceived an affection for a man who was neither a priest nor an acolyte.

I easily detected their deceit and their egotism of caste. One who would frankly own to me her weakness for some priest or acolyte, I would with equal frankness pity, as was sometimes the case with some educanda, conversa, or nun, who made a confidant of me and confided to my keeping the secret of this passion. I sympathized with them with a heart given to sentiments of humanity, and participating in the weakness of its nature; with a heart which, while even under the coarse flannel of the monastic habit, still palpitated with the feelings natural to woman.

I was once near to rekindling the smouldering fire of love in my heart, not, however, for a *religioso*. I asked the divine aid and the flame was extinguished. A pas-

sion at that time would only have aggravated my misfortune. He, towards whom my heart was turned, was a physician. I loved him from spontaneous inspiration. I loved him in the most recondite recesses of the affections, before the reason of it was perceived. In my position in the infirmary, as well as in the cells of the infirm, I was often brought into contact with him. I accompanied him with eyes humbled to the earth, with the sentiment of the abdication I had made of every tender emotion, and with the conviction that, under the vow of monastical chastity, I should have been deemed despicable enough by him had a single look of mine betrayed my passion.

Ah, who that has not adopted the sackcloth, can know how deaf to the invocations of the heart is the isolation of the cloister! He never knew anything of my efforts to repress these palpitating rebels; nor, as a consequence, could he know of my triumph. So much the better. I knew afterwards that his heart was dedicated to another woman less unfortunate than I. He died in the flower of his years and in the best part of his career. Was he lamented by the woman that he loved?

Let us return to our story.

Two years passed in the above-named office and I was nominated and appointed sagrestana. It is a duty, which more than any other, brings the nun in contact

with the priests. Several of the sisters thought I would not be able to complete my term of office without falling in love with some one of them; while others, more determined, arranged a conspiracy to accomplish my fall. My predecessor in this office, in giving me the keys to the sacred objects, told me that of the four acolytes, one only could be relied upon for the prompt performance of his duties, and on him I must rely. She was a good and an honest woman and I followed her counsel.

Meanwhile, the conspirators followed me anxiously to assure themselves if, and how, and when, I should fall into their trap. What matter was it to them if their champion was of a vulgar figure, grossly ignorant, and very coarse in his manners? In the service of the sagrestia, I had given the preference to him, because it was of him that my predecessor had spoken to me. This fact was a consoling augury to them!

It was very natural that the action of the conspiracy should concentrate on him. Of how much iniquity is not idleness the parent? The sisters of the community often found time to go down to the comunichino and to torture this poor fellow in this way: —

"Now you are happy, — are you not?"

"Why?"

"Because you have at last a young and smart sagrestana."

Another would say: —

"How lucky you are!"

"Why?"

"It is said the sagrestana is delighted with you; in fact, that she is in love with you."

"What an idea! From what is it inferred?"

"From the preference which she gives to you always over the other acolytes, and the confidence she reposes in you."

As I have said elsewhere, I suffered more or less all the time from nervous affections, and convulsions were periodical with me. At my every indisposition they would call at the postern, and with the impudence of courtesans salute him in my name. Nor did their impudence stop here; they wrote and delivered a note to him, signing my name to it. About the same time they stole a linen pocket-handkerchief from me and presented it to him in my name.

It will not be deemed a matter of surprise that the poor youth's head began to grow giddy. Some one announced to him that I was seriously ill, and he was seen to draw from his pocket the identical handkerchief and wipe his eyes, unable any longer to hide his grief.

"He is at last desperately in love with you!" they said, rubbing their hands, and transported with joy.

Of the comical passion of the young man I became assured when I was scarcely convalescent and entered upon my duties again. I was told the story of the note and the handkerchief, and was so much enraged that I

hurled the most indignant reproaches on the heads of these intriguing nuns. I gave him to understand, very soon, that the note was a forgery, and that the handkerchief which had been presented to him in my name had been stolen from a bundle of clothes which I had but just before put up for the washerwoman. He received these bitter truths with a sad face, and pledged himself to return the note to me, for I wanted it to pursue some investigations as to the authorship of it, on which I had already determined; but, either because of the promptings of others, or from spontaneous reluctance, he never returned it to me.

The truth is, that the poor fellow was deeply enamored of me. His face became pale and thin, his nose sharp, and his eyes sunk in his head. His mouth, naturally large, had, from his face having grown so thin, taken the proportions of that of a lizard. I reproved him unfeelingly.

"Fool!" I said to him; "do you not understand that you have become the laughing-stock of a parcel of nuns not less foolish than designing, who, while making a jest of your sincerity, would like, at the same time, to gain another advantage; they would like to get an opportunity out of it to molest me, and, if possible, to bring my reputation down to a level with their own? Come to yourself again, control your folly, and be careful in future to comport yourself more wisely in the discharge of your duties, if you do not wish to lose both your bread and your honor."

He replied that he now saw the excess of his own folly; that he had not, however, been the author of this ill-fated passion, but that such and such nuns had by degrees insinuated it into his heart; finally, that his love had reached that point of intensity that he had no hope whatever of being able to control it.

"In that case," I replied, "there remains for you but a single means of escape: it is hard, but inevitable."

"Say what it is; I shall obey your counsel, whatever it may be."

"The jests of these women are like tigers' claws; to-day they laugh at your simplicity; to-morrow they would dig your grave. Listen to my advice: seek a position in some other church, and bring me your resignation of your charge here as soon as possible."

The dry and decided tone in which I spoke was, however at variance with the feeling of compassion which I felt at being obliged to suggest so severe a remedy to the poor fellow. But there was no other course.

This interview, which had lasted scarcely ten minutes, was concluded on the part of the acolyte with a flood of tears, and was interrupted by the arrival of the sagrestano (sexton).

Convinced that the nuns were hatching some new criminal project, and grieving, besides, to ruin the prospects of the young man, who had really no other fault than that of having been born half-witted, I decided to make one more effort to save him. I went to the abbess

and besought her to appoint some else to the office of sagrestana in my place, telling her, that since my illness I felt myself unequal to the task of sustaining the burden of that office.

She replied that she did not think my health was so much impaired as I seemed to suppose; besides, it was not proper for a nun to be relieved of an office until the expiration of her term of service. My confessor, who also took an interest in the matter, united his prayers to mine to induce her to make the change; but she remained inflexible to our reiterated demands, and persevered in her refusal.

Irritated finally by my continued solicitations for the same thing, she said to me, one day: —

"Why is it you desire to be relieved of your office? Is it because some silly girls have accused you of having an amorous commerce with the acolyte? What a foolish woman you are! They themselves have done the same thing, are doing it, and will continue to do it! If you have a grain of sense left you will not care a fig for it."

Things went on, therefore, until the conclusion of the drama without arriving at any spontaneous dissolution. One day, whilst I was singing in the coro, the enamored young man fainted in the church. The building was crowded; a cry for silence was heard; the priests in the vestry were very much annoyed; the acolytes enjoyed

it; the nuns dropped their masks and discharged their arrows at their victim, exclaiming in chorus: —

"How ridiculous this is! How stupid! The holy mass is turned into a comedy. These scenes will bring the convent to shame!"

Shortly after I found the acolyte, who was struggling with his tears.

"We are all of us dismissed," said he.

"Is it possible?"

"It is. My God, what will become of us?"

"All four of you dismissed? Have you then dragged your colleagues into your ruin, also?"

"No; the ruin shall be mine alone. The others will only be sent away for appearance' sake; they will soon return. But I shall come back no more!"

"They have done well to dismiss you so politely," I added. "I am heartily sorry for you, but your situation in this place had become insupportable."

The inhabitants of these volcanic regions, like their wine, are full of fire; and I am a Neapolitan. Burning with indignation, I went directly to the abbess and expressed my satisfaction with the dismissal of the clerks, but did not neglect to reproach her for her obstinacy in retaining me in office after I had desired to resign it.

"If you had accepted my resignation when I insisted so strongly upon it," I said, "you would not have been under the cruel necessity of putting into execution a precaution which will damage the reputation of your

convent not less than these poor clerks. But that which is done cannot be undone. A simple explanation remains for me to demand of you. Is it real and positive, or only simulated, this dismissal of the four clerks? In other words, is it your intention, after a time, to recall three of them, leaving one alone to suffer the penalty of ultimate exclusion?"

"No," she replied; "Heaven will not permit it. The exclusion will be general and definitive; it will be for all."

"Will you have sufficient firmness, do you believe, to resist the manœuvres of the nuns who protect them?"

We were just at that moment in front of a little chapel dedicated to the Virgin. The abbess turned towards the picture, raised her hand, and said: —

"I swear by the holy Mary that not one of them shall ever return!"

"And I swear," I replied, "that if one of them enters by one door, I will depart by the other!"

We separated in peace.

But the poor woman was firmer in her promises than in her deeds. She counted the votes which were indispensable to re-elect her to the abbessate; and eight days subsequently the acolytes returned.

The intrigues of the nuns did not cease here. The clique now attempted to defame me; with no very great success, however.

One only of the four acolytes who had been dismissed

from the church was subsequently denounced to the cardinal by the confessors and the monks, who, with an excessive desire to surrender himself to the wishes of his creatures, obliged the poor fellow to depose the clerical habit.

The abbess had failed to keep her oath! I was determined to keep mine, and I made this day a fixed resolution to leave, at whatever cost, a place which was continually agitated by the contemptible machinations of wicked women, and overflowing with the bitterness of envy!

CHAPTER XVI.

CHIARINA (LITTLE CLARA).

Discontent with convent life — Failing health — Appeal through my physician to the pope — Opposition of the canonico — Entrance of Chiarina into the convent — Her great beauty — She is confided to my care — Her delicate health — Her distressing cough — The nuns make fun of her suffering — Ill-treated by her nurse — Her brother takes her from the convent — Circumstances compel her to return — I vote against her readmission — Her sudden death.

THE moral sufferings and incessant agitations I had endured; the coercive restraints; the sedentary life; the unhealthy atmosphere of the convent, during the winter months; and, above all, the petty annoyances of which I had become the victim, — all these had too seriously affected my health for me not to begin to think of some means of relief. In the mean time, my very dear sister Josephine had died, who, more than any one else, used to feel for and sympathize with me in my misfortune. My grief at not having been able to embrace her, nor to see her a single moment before she died, made me feel still more keenly a sincere repentance for having taken a vow diametrically opposed to my inclinations.

It is, nevertheless, very true that as time passed I found my condition much changed. Having now

arrived at mature age, I was able, I thought, to take care of myself, *sicut in quantum;* besides which, enjoying more than one little pension, I should be able to place myself, I thought, in one of the many *ritiri* ("retreats," so called) of the city, which are less rigidly governed by monastic rules, and more conformable to my own inclinations; to which, besides, I should prefer having recourse, rather than to the hospitality of my mother's second husband. She, seeing me a prey to such desperation, was exceedingly grieved, and, from time to time, manifested great remorse at ever having placed me in the convent. She promised me then her co-operation in every attempt which could be urged, on my part, to obtain more freedom; and faithfully maintained her promise.

But in the convent my condition was somewhat modified. An illness of a few days had terminated in the death of my second aunt, — she, who for so many years had filled the office of abbess. Gaetanella was no longer in my service. After the circumstances which occurred with Angiola Maria, — circumstances in which she manifested such slight regard for me, and no humanity whatever towards the poor insane woman, — I had yielded her to my aunt, and, in exchange, had provided myself with a young girl, who had just entered the convent, a native of a small town near Naples. She was named Maria Giuseppa. She was seventeen years old, and had a prepossessing face. Her family

had been at great expense to place her here, and she had not yet experienced any homesickness on account of the loss of her personal liberty. She had, from the first, conceived a strong attachment for me, and protested every day that she was ready to follow me wherever circumstances might lead me.

From the windows of my prison, there stood a house, at a window of which I often used to see a young nun sitting, engaged in conversation with her friends and relatives. I looked at her again and again,—examined her dress. There could be no doubt she belonged to some convent *di Clausura*, and not to that class of bigots called *monache di casa*. By what means had she recovered the inestimable pleasure of again crossing the paternal threshold?

The desire to ascertain something more about this, to me a wonder, entirely occupied my mind. I discovered, finally, that she belonged to the clausura in the convent of Nola, and was enabled to remain a long time outside of the cloister, having once adduced her motives and renewed her leave of absence once in six months, by which means she obtained an indefinite prolongation of time.

What a consoling ray of light was this to penetrate into the darkness of my prison!

Why, profiting by the message Providence had perhaps sent to me, why should not even I be able to obtain a similar release, and lead a similar kind of life?

That my health was suffering from my confinement was palpably evident. I was subject to nervous fits of sick-headache and to spasms which had already seriously affected my complexion.

Plump, fresh, rosy, full of spirit and of happiness, were the greater part of my companions. Thoughtlessness, idleness, and apathy were as beneficial to them as the poultry-yard is to the hens. On the contrary, I was becoming every day more pallid and meagre, my cheeks more sunken, my eyes more and more dull, and my hair fell out by the handful.

I determined, therefore, to make an attempt to get away. Pursuing my plan, I got one of the physicians to the convent to make the necessary certificate as to my health, to which I added my own supplication; and these I forwarded to Rome without delay. I felt so secure of a successful issue, that, from the day on which I sent them, I began to count the minutes I had yet to suffer. I would say to myself, "Now the courier has delivered my petition; now the Holy Father is reading it, with his mind disposed in my favor; now he has granted my prayers, signed and sealed the document, and given it to the proper authority to be despatched to Naples; in a day or two the courier will return; to-day is Thursday; Saturday morning, early, good-by to the convent! Oh, but these two days will seem longer to me than two centuries!"

Meantime, the canonico gave me no peace on the

subject of my desire to leave the convent, and sought to weaken the poesy of my hopes with all the blows which the logic and the cynicism of his profession placed at his disposition. He did not fail to complain to the abbess of the foolish persecutions to which I had been subjected by the nuns, saying to her, in conclusion: —

"My penitent is a woman of decided character, although of few words. You may be certain that she is determined to go out of the convent, and will get out, too, I believe."

"San Benedetto will not permit it. Whoever has once assumed his habit, can never lay it off, either alive or dead," responded the abbess.

However anxious I was to leave this detested place, I still could not have gone away without grieving to leave there a little girl in whom I had become exceedingly interested, — a child, in fact, whom I loved as I could only have loved the daughter of an only sister. She was descended from an honest and well-to-do Neapolitan family, and had been distinctly recommended to me a year previously to the before-mentioned events.

Chiarina — such was her name — had been confided to the care of an aunt, who had been in the convent forty years, and at that time had become excessively childish from age. Much afflicted, too, by the horrid abuses which her conversa subjected her to, in her weak state, the poor old woman had supplicated me to

take her niece under my own protection and be a mother to her. Each educanda had a nun for her mistress. Chiarina was then given into my custody, and I gladly welcomed her.

Having been what is called a seven months' child, the poor little thing had only lived, as it were, by miracle. She was now sixteen, but did not look to be more than ten. Losing both her parents at an early age, she was left with only two brothers. The younger was studying in a neighboring city, and the older, on account of his business, was almost always away from home.

Chiarina had the face of a little angel, with regular features and an attractive countenance. It was impossible for persons of her own sex to see her, even in the street, without feeling the wish to gratify their senses by the contemplation of her enchantingly languid expression. Those eyes of hers breathed such an effusion of affection as would instantly placate the fiercest anger. But with all this, she was deformed in body and very feeble. Affected by an aneurism which had dilated the cardiac region, she was tormented by an obstinate cough, and with palpitation of the heart, which rendered her breathing suffocating and her voice husky.

In the qualities of her mind she was not less beautiful than in her face. She was ingenuous, docile, and artless, and endowed with an admirable stock of patience. This little girl possessed that rare faculty of good judgment,

as to what to do and what to avoid, which I, her senior by many years, admired, but could not imitate.

In the convent, however, besides her declining health, the poor girl had two other misfortunes to contend with. One was, that of being my pupil, the other, that of having for her servant a conversa who was a tyrant to her. It was very natural that the hatred which the young nun had sworn against the mistress should be reflected upon her pupil! As to the conversa, she was a monster of brutality, — a ferocious wild beast with a human face. The child was wealthy, having inherited some considerable property, and the conversa was hatching the criminal project of not allowing that booty to escape from her grasp, but to secure its possession by obligating her, by every sort of compulsion, to take the vows, and accustoming her to her own fearful despotism. To this villanous design, however, the malady of her little mistress was an obstacle. It was necessary for the success of her scheme, therefore, that she should conceal this illness as much as possible, in order that she might not be excluded from the Capitolo on this account. But how could she conceal her cough and her distressed respiration? By dint of intimidation and scolding, she attempted it.

If her conversa heard her cough in the corridor she would scold her in the most vulgar manner, and has even placed her hand over the poor child's mouth to suffocate the noise she would be likely to make. When

she saw her on the stairs in conversation with some other nun, she made her run upstairs immediately, a hundred steps without stopping. The poor creature became livid and short-breathed to that degree that it seemed sometimes that she was drawing her last breath. I took occasion, sometimes, to scold this conversa for such brutality; but Chiarina told me that after my scoldings the conversa always treated her much worse than before; for which reason I was compelled to curb my indignation and protests, which would only have tended to increase the natural ferocity of the inhuman servant.

In order to hide the natural deformity of this child, the conversa conceived the idea of straightening out her body, and for the purpose she placed around her breast, corsets filled with strips of iron, instead of whalebone. Chiarina came into my room the next morning afterwards and threw herself down in an arm-chair, looking like a corpse, and with a faint and apparently dying voice, said: —

"Signora Enrichetta, for pity's sake, unlace me; I feel as though I should suffocate."

I took her into a private room and loosened her bonds. At evening, however, I was obliged to replace everything as I had found it, for fear that the Cerberus should discover what had been done. I often said to Chiarina: —

"How long, my dear, are you to be the slave of this

bad servant? If you wish to get rid of her I will help you. Leave it to me."

"No, no; for mercy's sake, don't do it," she replied, in a supplicating tone, clasping her hands and trembling at the very idea of the monster's rage.

This interesting little creature, so overflowing with candor, with religion, and with kindness, and so maltreated by nature and harassed by destiny, nourished a singular affection for animals, and especially for the swallow. Seated at the open window, with her head resting upon her hands, she spent a large part of the morning watching the flights of these little creatures, and in the contemplation of the joy of their little families, nesting under the roof, and in listening to their garrulous preludes while they were feeding their young. Stories about the habits and instincts of the swallows threw her into ecstasies, and she was never satiated with listening to anecdotes about them. Every once in a while I told her something new about their reputed transmigrations. She, interrupting me, used to say, sadly: —

"They, at least, can go away in the autumn, to return again in the spring to the same nest, while we —"

In spite, however, of all these requisites, which threw such a charm about her, the young nuns treated her not less harshly than did her own conversa. Whenever they heard her recite the prayers in the coro, a thing which I wished to prohibit, but of which she was extravagantly

fond, they made fun of her oppressed and difficult breathing, or, laughing at her zeal, would exclaim, in a loud voice, "What a tiresome thing!"

The surgeon of the community, Signor Giampietro, had assisted at the accouchement of her mother when Chiarina was born, and for that reason, and because of his natural sympathy, he felt a strong paternal love for her, and frequently recommended her to my care, and urged me not to allow her to fatigue herself, nor to suffer from any molestation whatever. Because these recommendations did not suit her, the conversa told Chiarina not to go again into the room where the surgeon was.

I had some time previously re-entered the infirmary. One day, while the doctor was sitting in the porteria, Chiarina and I came in accidentally. He took her by the hand, and, making her sit on his knee, listened to what I had to say about the health of the child, whose pantings for breath increased fearfully, and the violent throbbings of whose heart were now apparent to every one. He then made her stand up; and, in placing one hand upon her chest, and the other on her back, to note the rhythm of the breathing, his fingers touched the iron sticks.

"What's this you are wearing around your chest?" he inquired.

And the poor child, blushing, answered, "Nothing."

I made a sign to the surgeon to proceed with the

examination; and, on breaking the string of the corslet of black flannel, he found it all.

"Misericordia!" he cried, furiously, "who has been so infamously cruel as to put this iron waistcoat on this unfortunate little creature?"

"It is my conversa," she replied.

"Call that wretch to me immediately," he said.

The child became pallid, and trembled with fright, and besought me to appease him; and he, seeing her thus frightened, restrained himself, and then turning to the portress and the other nuns, who were present, said: —

"Murders are not all committed with the dagger, nor with poison. To put such an infamous thing as this around the body of this poor girl is only another mode of killing her. Compressing her heart in this way will hurry her to her grave."

Words thrown to the winds. Chiarina continued to wear the iron jacket. Neither the surgeon's admonitions nor my entreaties were heeded. Her brother was in the Abruzzi. I wrote him a letter, in which I told him distinctly that the retention of his sister for a much longer time in the convent would be equivalent to abandoning her to premature death. He came at once to Naples, and told Chiarina to prepare to go away with him. She grieved exceedingly to go, although she was convinced, in her own mind, that I would not remain long in the convent; for she thought

that my petition to the Holy Father could not possibly be denied.

She left the convent in charge of her brother; and the young nuns, in token of their thankfulness, lighted the lamp before the shrine of the Holy Virgin.

She was out of the convent; but a terrible destiny still pursued this poor little girl. It was now winter. The cold in the Abruzzi, where her brother now lived, was seriously prejudicial to the health of Chiarina; and, as time and reparation partially obliterated the recollection of her past sufferings in the convent, she thought that her health was even better there than in travelling with her brother.

Some time subsequently she returned to Naples, and demanded to be received again as an educanda. What an idea!

I strove to persuade her against this course, telling her that she was not manifesting her usual prudence, and reminded her of her past sufferings; and counselled her to select rather a *ritiro*, where she might take a servant, and live tranquilly and independently. She replied: —

"My dear friend, my wish is to remain near to you. I re-enter the convent solely on your account."

"But I expect to leave San Gregorio soon."

"Several months have already passed since you expected to receive permission, and it has not yet come. Who knows if it ever will?"

When the Capitolo was convened to vote on the question of her re-entrance, I determined to keep my own conscience void of offence. In the act of depositing my vote, I raised my hand, so that all should see that I placed a black ball in the urn. She was re-admitted only by the votes of the older nuns; the younger ones all voted against it.

She returned; but very soon repented not having followed my advice. Her cough, always worse during the night, disturbed the sleep of the conversa; and, in order to avoid the reproaches and imprecations which she was compelled to submit to on that account, the poor little sick creature used to cover her head with the bedclothes, and lie there motionless, and like one buried.

One morning her conversa went to wake her. She seemed to be sound asleep. She called her by her name, turned her over, and called her again. Still no answer. She shook her; but she did not move. She then turned down the bedclothes, — she was dead!

Sixteen times since have the swallows come back; but the angelic spirit of Chiarina will never more return to this vale of tears.

CHAPTER XVII.

CARDINAL RIARIO.

The "head" of the church in Naples — His ignorance and conceit — The "spouses of Christ" are infatuated with him — He presents the nuns with a huge sturgeon, thinking it good to eat — He visits the convent and inquires for me — Demands my reasons for desiring to leave the convent, and declares his opposition — I abandon myself to despair — He repeats his visit, and reasons with me to no purpose — He goes to Rome — I make another appeal to the Holy Father, which fails — The cardinal returns from Rome, bringing me a rosary which has been blessed by the pope, and demands some keepsake from me, in return, of my own working — He is refused — Another time he asks for some confetti of my own manufacture — He is again refused — My letter to the pope falls into the hands of the cardinal, who violates the seal of the confessional.

Cardinal Riario Sforza was exalted to the archiepiscopal chair of Naples six months after the death of Caracciolo, his predecessor, and after the vicarship of Savarese. Very young for such a post, with only a limited education, void alike of experience and of prudence, and of untrustworthy morals, he obtained this place only by the intervention of his uncle, who, in this age of gold, disposed of his talents and his influence at the command of Gregory XVI.

In order to give him a smattering of the obligations and of the duties of his office, of which he was totally ignorant, he had been for six months qualifying himself in the small see of Aversa. Pope Gregory died shortly after having conferred this inestimable boon on the cap-

ital of Ferdinand II. (for which the monarch cordially thanked him), and Mastai Feretti succeeded him in the holy see as "Pio Nino."

In the early days of his pontificate everybody knows that Pius IX., by his liberal professions and acts, gained a very favorable position in the good opinion of the world at large. He was not only liberal in fact, but, following the example of Aristides the Just, he was anxious to be known to the world as such. The little tub that he threw overboard to the whale kindled great hope in the hearts of the liberal party all over Italy, and already this afflicted people opened their hearts to legitimate aspirations; already a council was spoken of to decree the dissolution of the monastic vows, which had been, three centuries before, defined by the Council of Trent.

It was during this excitement that my demand for permission to leave the convent was forwarded to Rome.

Cardinal Riario, anxious in the commencement of his administration to manifest his zeal as a prelate, had repeatedly visited our convent. One day, after having been a long time entertained by the abbess and another nun, an exquisite dissembler, who might properly be called the real superiora, because the other could do nothing without consulting her, the entire community was convoked, purposely to welcome him. I came forward with the rest, avoiding the most prominent places

in favor of those who esteemed it a greater honor than I did to be presented to him.

I had then an opportunity to observe that he was deficient in the most important qualification for his position, — that of education. It was evident that the time spent at the *scopone* in Rome had been employed in some other manner than in study; he had only learned there *la pasquinate;* but, if he thought to imitate the Romans in sarcasm, he had neither the subtlety nor the promptness which gives to the itching the advantage of opportunity; for a *mauvais plaisant*, between Marforio and Pulcinella, but little is necessary.

In affecting an illy prepared gravity, he took occasion, sometimes, to perpetrate either an allocution or a warning; and it was difficult to discover, from his diffuse remarks, what conclusion he was aiming at. His ideas were awkwardly united, his terms and phrases out of place, and his construction obscure and confused. Although inexperienced in speaking, and still more so in writing his own language, he had an itching vanity to be thought a Latin scholar; on which account he would often mix Latin proverbs and texts of Scripture confusedly together in his remarks. I am really afraid, however, that of his *Limen Grammaticum*, learnt in the Eternal City, he had retained but very little in his mind; only sufficient, perhaps, to conjugate the present and future tenses of the verb *amare*. That was, at any

rate, as I afterwards learned, the opinion of the people of Rome.

Riario was then, in his own conceit, a great man. There is no disputing about taste. It is indubitable, however, that each one of his visits electrified the young Benedettine. Immediately after leaving him in the parlatorio, they might be found assembled in little groups, where each one endeavored to surpass the other in panegyrics on the endowments, spiritual and natural, of His Eminence.

Some said, "How handsome he is!" "What a noble deportment!" "What a fascinating look!" "What a beautiful hand!" Others, "How learned and well instructed he is!" "From his mouth comes only honey!" My comment to myself was, "He has hardly learned yet to walk alone!" But little else was done or thought of in the convent, for many days and nights, but to feast on the odor of his words. Those, then, to whom these odorous nosegays had been presented were covered with blushes; their bosoms palpitated with excitement, and they became perfectly distracted by the unusual emotion.

I had always avoided him as much as I could, and had never spoken to him. In fact, I had conceived that insuperable repugnance to him which is sometimes felt at first sight, and which we are often unable to justify. I cannot explain why, but from the first he seemed to me a Dandino, travestied into an ecclesiastic prince!

To show his gallantry, he sent a present to the community, once upon a time, of a basket of molluscs. The nuns were so overjoyed at the present that they gave a piastre to the servant who brought it, and harped upon and magnified the gracefulness of the so-called *nuovo superiore*.

A few days subsequently another present arrived. A facchino, who was conveyed by a servant of the cardinal, brought in a fish of enormous size, decked out with orange leaves. In presenting this huge mass of animal matter, the servant delivered, in the name of His Eminence, an interminable litany of compliments, while the facchino was standing and perspiring freely under the weight of the fish. Another piastre was given to the servant, and two carlini (a carlino is equal to eight cents) to the facchino.

The nuns crowded into the porteria, rejoicing over their present, and those of them who appropriated the compliment to themselves vied with each other in proposing in favor of the liveried servant something more sumptuous than an ordinary present.*

At this juncture the book-keeper (house-steward) arrived.

"Do you know," one said, "Don Giuseppe, that the cardinal has sent in another present, more magnificent than the first? You must prepare yourself to write

* The South-Italians are much given to making presents to each other. These are generally sent by the hands of one of the servants of the family, who always expects to receive a gratuity, if it is only a few soldi.

a second letter of thanks, in the name of the community."

"Indeed!" he exclaimed; "what has he sent?"

"A fish; but such a fish! there will be enough even for the converse!"

"Let me see it."

The converse drew the huge sturgeon to the door. The steward looked at it through his glass from head to tail, made them turn it over and over again, and, after having ruminated on everything which he knew on the subject of ichthyology, said:—

"Do you know, signora abbess, and you other reverends, that this seems to me to be a fish brought from the Museum of Natural History?"

"A fish from the Museum!" repeated more than a hundred voices in chorus; "the present is much more splendid than we had imagined!"

"Well, well; but this is a good joke! The fish is not fit to be eaten!"

"But the same servant brought it who brought the other present," added the nuns.

"I have the honor to tell you that this fish is a monstrosity."

"Don Giuseppe mio, you are demented!"

"Very well; I will call in a fisherman to look at it."

While all the sisters stood around, exclaiming, "Gesù! Gesù!" the fisherman arrived from a neighbor-

ing market, and, looking at the famous present, exclaimed: —

"It is a sea-calf; throw it away!"

"A sea-calf!" said Don Giuseppe. "I said well, then, when I remarked that it was a monster from the Museum!"

Imagine the rage of the nuns, especially of those who had appropriated the compliment! The fact that the nuns understood the trick came to the ears of the cardinal, who discovered, at length, that gallantries cost more in Naples than in Rome. However this may be, it was said that he received, the same day, a letter of thanks from the community of San Gregorio, and that he thenceforth abstained from giving any further proofs of his partiality for these sisters.

Coming another time to San Gregorio, he was entertained a long time by the superiora and her nun-shadow, her *pedissequa*. The other nuns were waiting, meanwhile, in a state of the utmost trepidation, expecting every moment to be called into his presence, according to the usual custom.

Instead of which, the bell was rung for me.

I descended to the porteria, and found the abbess, who had just come from the parlatorio.

"The cardinal desires to speak to you," she said.

My heart jumped to my mouth; my thoughts recurred immediately to my demand for permission to leave the

convent, which had been forwarded to Rome two months before.

I went immediately to the parlatorio. The cardinal was seated in an easy-chair. At first sight, he seemed to me to be playing the exquisite, while a light perfume of cologne-water from his person diffused itself through the room.

I kneeled before him as the use, or, to say better, the abuse, demanded. He raised his hand and blessed me, and, looking at me a long time in silence, he said: —

"You have sent a petition to the Holy See for permission to leave the cloister?" in a mawkish and mellifluous tone of voice.

"Yes, your Eminence," I replied, trembling not less from fear than from hope.

"And for what motive?"

"On account of my health."

He smiled ironically, and, turning and looking at me attentively, added: —

"I don't think you look sick."

"That I am ill, God knows."

"From what sort of illness do you suffer?"

"One that proceeds from my nerves" —

"Who does not suffer from this cause?"

— "And convulsions," I added.

"All women suffer from the same cause. Hysterics, hysterics, and nothing else. The disease is more com-

mon among the women of the world than it is in the convent."

After a brief pause, I remarked that my petition had been accompanied by a certificate from the physician.

"I have little faith in physicians. In some, more, — in others, less; they are all impostors."

"But mine was sworn."

"All are unbelievers, — all perjure themselves."

I remained silent, and, after a brief pause, he continued: —

"You must understand that all the petitions which are sent to Rome from my diocese are by the Holy Father remanded to me. Your petition took the usual course, to the end that I might verify the statements and accord my permission. Now, in order that you may not indulge in any vain hopes, I must tell you that my vote is against it; therefore you will do well to abandon all hope of ever leaving the convent.

I was thunderstruck. He was surprised to see me so much distressed, and invited me to be seated. Then, softening the tone of his voice, which had been tuned to a harsh key in his last remarks, he added: —

"I have just spoken with the superiora, and she assures me that the motive for your petition is not truly that of health, but rather of caprice."

I understood now the part the cardinal had played in this affair, and the perception of it brought me to

myself. The blood rushed to my face, and I turned to him with a look of the most intense scorn.

"Your Eminence," I said, forcing myself to restrain the agitation of my nerves; "your Eminence ought to be incapable of descending to such low and ignominious intrigues."

"Do not be alarmed," he replied, interrupting me; "to this nonsense I attach no importance, being convinced that nothing improper has ever passed between you and him. Could I suppose that a noble — I mean a nun, as you are, would descend to the level of a simple acolyte? Still, your wish to leave the cloister is absurd, and you must abandon it."

Coldly and fearlessly I remarked to him that I could not believe that God, the Holy Father, and His Eminence, had all of one accord determined upon my death, by prolonging my stay in the convent. But he, cutting me short, passed to other subjects of foreign, futile, and idle gossip, and after some time he rose suddenly, and said: —

"I shall return often to visit you; let me see you always in good spirits, and do not hide yourself as you have done heretofore, and let me also have the pleasure of learning that you have driven from your heart all intention of returning to the world."

I returned to my cell and abandoned myself to desperation, which was further exasperated by overhearing the giggling of the nuns. I fled from them all. Having

fulfilled my duties in the coro, and in the infirmary as well, I retired to my chamber by the shortest path, where I spent my time either in reading, working, or in meditation; and there, more from the need of some distraction than anything else, I began to scribble these memoirs. Maria Giuseppa, my good conversa, and the only companion of my solitude, would not move from my side except from the most urgent necessity, and, being less experienced than myself in priestly simulation, she conceived, in order to comfort me, the most foolish and chimerical hopes, to which I often responded with that Dantesca apostrophe of Astigiano: —

> ". . . . Stirpe malnata, e cruda,
> Che degli *altrui* perigli, all' ombra, ride!" *

My mother, too, was inconsolable, having ascertained that this favor which I had asked had been conceded to other nuns less ill than I. The canonico attempted in vain to moderate my anger; it was not possible. I abandoned myself to the most ungovernable feelings of desolation.

I now made a new and more vigorous application and forwarded it to Rome. Consistent, meanwhile, with his promise, Riario came more frequently than usual to the convent. Every time the bell sounded to call the community together in the parlatorio, I experienced a chill.

* . . . low-born, vile and cruel race, who at others' dangers, at spectres, laughs!

To avoid that disgusting meeting I would have given, I know not what; but how was I to do it? As soon as he arrived, his first question was: —

"And your Caracciolo, where is she?"

Though trembling with rage, I was obliged to go before him and to listen to his inquiries, delivered in a most mellifluous tone of voice, about the state of my health, and if I were tranquil in mind, etc., etc.; all of which seemed to me like the compliments of the executioner to one about to be hanged.

"Poor child, she is so good! She is never seen nor heard!" answered the hypocritical abbess, accustomed always to praise every one while in her presence.

"Brava!" added the eminent visitor. "So all goes on well?"

One day the superiora told me to advance to the front rank of those who were before the cardinal. Such studied preference made the nuns indignant. They muttered something against the abbess, and I overheard them say: —

"How ridiculous! He is always talking of the Caracciolo."

"Eminenza," said the superiora one day to the cardinal, in my presence, "I must denounce this signora *monachella*, who is every day becoming more and more misanthropic. She flies from all society and passes the greater part of her time shut up in her own cell, and

even in the hours of recreation is not willing to unite with the other nuns."

"Leave her a moment alone with me," said he, in a tone of patriarchal authority.

The nuns went out much irritated, and I seated myself at some distance from him, curious to see how His Eminence would commence.

He composed himself to an affable manner to inspire me with confidence, and, wiping the perspiration from his face with a linen-cambric pocket-handkerchief, he inquired: —

"What is your motive for remaining always alone and musing?"

"Is that a crime, also? After I have performed all my duties and obeyed the precepts, it seems to me that I might have my time to myself, and that others need not trouble themselves about my habits."

"Well, I should like to be able to look through the walls of your room to discover what it is with which you occupy so many hours of your time. It must be that your confessor does not penetrate into all your secrets."

"I read, scribble, and work; and, perhaps, even this is an infraction of the rules!"

"Certainly it is not permitted to you to read or to write, unless in works of devotion; and, if you please, what are you reading and writing?"

"I seek, in reading some instructive book, a comfort to the oppression which is brutifying me here; and I am

sketching the recollections of my captivity, to leave a record of it behind me."

"Oppression — memories — captivity. This is surprising. Where in the deuce have you derived these phrases of the carbonaro? Do you not know that I ought to punish you severely for these foolish fantasies?"

"Can you do even this? I need, then, only the chain at my ankles, — can you not order it put on?"

"The interest I take in you does not permit it. I should like, however, to make you lay down that cursed, rabid wish to recover your liberty. On this, I am absolute, implacable, inexorable. I will never consent to it."

"You attempt in vain to deprive me of every ray of hope. I have written again to the Holy See."

"I know it; I know it; and I shall write against you, always denying you. Will you confide to me, by the way, where it is you wish to go, if you should get permission to leave the convent?"

"To the home of my mother. Although I have no longer any need of tutelage, I believe no other woman to be so well qualified to take charge of the daughter as her mother."

In pronouncing these words, my eyes were swollen with tears, and my mind was filled with memories of my father.

The cardinal indulged in a Mephistophelian laugh, and said: —

"A sham! you want to get out rather to dance; in the home of your mother they have balls; but take good care what you do, or the police may look in upon you."

My patience was finally exhausted. Seizing the border of the scapulary, I said: —

"With this dress, abhorred by everybody, I should be ashamed to be seen, and still more to take part in a dance. I demand my liberty only to reacquire a supreme benefit, the enjoyment of which I renounced because of my inexperience, of my weakness, and of the force of an adverse destiny."

"I cannot permit it," the cardinal repeated frequently, and every time with increasing severity. "Now," he added, "I am going to Rome myself; when I return, I will see you again."

"And I, for my part, shall never cease to hope for my redemption. A pleasant journey."

And when he had turned his back, I could not help adding: —

"Go to perdition!"

My dejection now increased daily, and my brain began to be really affected by it. I confronted my moral sufferings with those of the two insane converse and began to fear I was becoming crazy myself.

The hopes I had reposed in the liberal promises of Pius IX. were meanwhile vanishing. He at first proposed to dissolve the vows; then spoke of a five-yearly renewal of them; then it was given out that such a re-

newal of them, would be restricted to such nuns only as had made the profession after the Breve, and at last he ceased to speak any further about it. In the mind of Pius IX., monastical emancipation and love of country had submitted to the same fate.

"E quando Roma non voltò mantello!"*

My first intention, as I have already said, was to go out only for six months; reserving to myself the right to renew the permission at the end of this time, and to pass from this into some other cloister, in case a further prolongation of time was denied to me. The capricious repulse I had met with — having been refused that which was every day conceded to those nuns who fell ill in most of the convents of Naples, especially in the summer season — stung me to the quick. It was now evidently a personal affair, and rather than succumb, I would have renounced existence itself.

From that moment I bade adieu to every sort of palliative, or half-way measure, and looked directly and only to a dissolution of my vows. I collected such information as I could on the subject, read more books and consulted with a learned canonico, from whom I learned that I must send in my petition, even before the five years of the profession had expired, and that it would be necessary, also, to prove that I was made a nun against my own will; and finally, that the cause must first be heard at the Curia of Naples, and after-

* And when did Rome not change her cloak?

wards at Rome; all of which would occupy much time, require much money, and offered but slight hopes of success.

This information disconcerted me. The fifth year of my profession was about to expire; and then, the Curia of Naples, would it not have at its head the cardinal archbishop, who was doggedly opposed to my claim? could he not exhaust the patience of a nun who was without a protector? — and, further, where could I procure the money necessary to retain an advocate to go personally to Rome and give the inevitable *boccone* to the reverend magnates of that capital? The prospect terrified me. Nevertheless, determined not to fail for want of an effort, I resolved to send my petition to the Curia of Naples; and this I did, exposing all the circumstances by which violence had been done to my wishes, from the point when I first entered the convent until the day of taking the vows.

What was the fate of this effort? Was it intercepted at the Curia of Naples, which, either never allowed it to see the light or let it fall into the claws of the cardinal, who quietly pocketed it? I was never able to penetrate the mystery. Certain it is, however, that my petition disappeared, leaving no trace by which it could be followed.

Again I found myself in a strait, not knowing which way to turn. I thought of making a direct appeal to the Holy Father; open my mind to him frankly, and

endeavor to move him with compassion for my condition. Pius IX. was then thought to be a man of great capacity, as well as a man of the world. In the statement of my case, which I prepared expressly for him, I said that I believed it proper not to confine myself to an account of my health, which was declining every day, but to notify him also of other matters not less relevant; that is to say, that from my youth up, I had always had a strong desire for matrimony, and that I should marry if he would condescend to release me from the obligations I had assumed, and which, in spite of myself, propelled thereto by the currents of disastrous and fatal circumstances, I had been obliged to contract. In order to render inviolable the secrets of this petition, I placed at the head of it, CONFITEOR, which, as is well known, always precedes the auricular confession.

The cardinal, in the mean time, had returned from Rome. Coming to the convent one day, he inquired for me. He began his colloquy by making me a present of a rosary which had been blessed by the Pope, and which he had brought from the Holy City; and demanded in exchange for it some piece of needlework, the work of my own hands! This present seemed to me a bad augury. I desired my liberty rather than the ambiguities of such hypocritical trifles, and I told His Eminence that I did not know how to work anything with the needle suitable for him.

"That is not true," said he in an effeminate manner;

"I am not ignorant of your skill. Apply yourself to something; to some elegant piece of embroidery, for example; it will serve you for diversion."

The abbess now entered, and, on hearing of my refusal from the cardinal, she twisted her face into an expression of scorn and said, in an imperious tone, to the cardinal: —

"The work shall be executed without fail. I will myself see that she begins and finishes it."

For many days subsequently she annoyed me, reiterating her demands to know if I had already begun it, and what it could be, etc., etc. Irritated, finally, by these incessant molestations, I said to her: —

"Do you impose it upon me for discipline?"

"Oh, shame! I trust you will do it willingly."

"Then, with all due submission, you may do it yourself. I detest that man as much as a prisoner of state can detest the author of his imprisonment. Is it not he who keeps me here, by force, in this state of violence?"

"He does it only, as he believes, for your own good."

"For my good! I am immensely obliged to him. Would to God that he might hate me, instead of showing me such baleful friendship!"

"You ought to pass your time more pleasantly here now, certainly, for those foolish young nuns no longer annoy you."

"I do not perceive it," I replied; "if they are any less annoying, it is only because they fear that if I should

happen to leave the cloister, I might pay them off as they deserve."

The superiora bit her lip. I discovered subsequently that the subject of my congedo, considered in the light of a political sin, had occupied the attention of the authorities more than I had imagined, and that between the cardinal, the abbess, and my confessor there reigned the most perfect intelligence in regard to it.

Another time the cardinal having learned that from the infermeria I had been transferred to the *panettiera*, came to offer me his congratulations (!), and to demand of me some *dolci*, made by my own hands. Again he was refused. He visited the convent another time on business for the community. He first despatched the business which brought him there and then asked some of the nuns to show him to my cell, which he carefully explored in every part; then going out upon the terrace and looking upon Vesuvius, the adjacent hills, and the other beautiful scenery which may be seen from there, he exclaimed: —

"What a beautiful prospect there is from your room! What an immense horizon! This scene relieves the heart and edifies the spirit; and yet you desire to leave it!"

"This prospect," I replied, "only renders more attractive still, to the prisoner, the benefits of freedom."

"But you are free enough; who can tell but that one dose more of liberty might be fatal to you?"

"With similar words were the afflicted people of Agrigentum comforted," I replied, accompanying the irony with a smile.

He heard me but was silent, and departed. This was about the time that Apuzzo, de' Pietrocola, and Del Carretto were in the height of their power in Naples; the time when, in the rage for sophism, the idea was raised to the level of an axiom, that the people of the Two Sicilies, very happy in the state of lamb-like ignorance in which they lived, ought not to run the risk of being defrauded by seeking to extend the sum of their education beyond their a b c's.

To what part of the world did the fame of the ignominious catechism of Signor Apuzzo not arrive? Could clerical heathenism and Bourbonical despotism have left behind them any monument more infamous than this?

It was about six weeks after I had sent my last petition to the Holy Father, that I met my confessor one day, looking very sad and in a very bad humor. He had just come from the palace of the archbishop.

Who would have believed it? The letter which I had hoped to keep a secret even from the canonico himself, had been remitted from Rome to the Cardinal Archbishop!

And the secrets of the communication? Violated!

And the seal of the confession? Broken!

His Eminence desired to know from the canonico how,

when, and why he should have permitted that appeal to be sent to the Holy Father; and demanded to know, besides, if some turbulent passion had not suggested such an expedient to me.

The canonico asserted that he knew nothing of it; at least so he told me. It is true that in the confession I had made it a rule not to reveal anything to him except the mere infractions of the discipline.

The cardinal was exceedingly angry at this new attempt, which he was pleased to call my "*irrefrenable cospirazione*," and did not see me again for a long time. In the mean time, this petition falling into his hands severed the last hope I had of seeing an early termination to my days of purgatory.

Nevertheless, in place of these illusions which, by degrees, vanished as soon as they were born, there was aroused in me a different and more distinct ray of salvation. Raising itself from the sepulchre where it had been buried already for twenty-seven years, the genius of Italian liberty shook from its mane the dust of the tomb, and began to reassume its old life with greater strength than ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1848.

Italy in 1848 — My sympathy with the revolutionary movement — My conversa resolves to follow me — Excitement in Naples — Write to the pope again for permission to live out of the convent — Renewed opposition of the cardinal — The celebrated 15th of May — Barricades thrown up in the streets of Naples — The palazzo Gravina burned — The city declared in a state of siege — The pope finally grants my prayer in part — Consents that I leave the convent and live in a conservatorio — Difficulty in getting admission to one — Succeed finally, and leave San Gregorio for the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli.

Since the latter part of the year 1847, the horizon of Italy had assumed a menacing aspect, which presaged an imminent and inevitable crisis.

The people of our peninsula were absorbed in an attitude of expectation but little different from that of those who profess to be waiting for the Millennium. Every day seemed a century; and in the evening came disappointment; but every new sun that rose warmed into life the most buoyant hopes. Although I lived segregated from the world, I was kept informed of all by my relatives, and the least symptom of change, the least popular movement, made my heart leap for joy.

The convents of Naples have been for all time, and still continue to be, the most rabid hot-beds of despotism. As well from the insinuations of their superiors

as from spontaneous impulse, the nuns of San Gregorio are accustomed to pray, first, for the king, then, among other things, they ask God to exterminate the *malvagi*, that is to say, the liberals. With what a profound sense of reproach I was compelled to comply with this custom! Against such prayers my spirit protested with the most energetic disdain, and in spirit I besought the Almighty for the fall of tyranny, and for the triumph of the nation to which I gloried in belonging.

The change in my feelings appeared in my face, and was not unnoticed by the sisters; and they, with one accord, accused me of belonging to secret societies, of being a heretic, a sectarian, and I know not what besides; so that I found myself on the brink of a precipice. I, however, paid no attention to their lamentations, and deplored the gross ignorance in which they lived. Even from the day in which Ferdinand II. swore to support the constitution, and the liberty of the press was proclaimed, I freely bought the journals of the opposition, and read them, in a loud voice, under the dome of the convent for so many centuries deaf to the accents of liberty.

In the clamorous awakening of the people, in the tremendous roaring of the revolution, in the noise at the barricade, in the shaking of the thrones, — which so strongly contrasted with the sepulchral silence of my prison, — I experienced a satisfaction, a strange comfort, which delighted me. "How I should be gratified," I

said to myself, "if the faint-hearted and misanthropic echo of these places should be astounded now by the sound of a military trumpet! What if it should advance even to the saloons of the Capitolo!"

Meantime, my enthusiasm, feeding itself daily from the columns of the journals, increased by degrees, until I fancied I could even see the priests trembling with fanaticism and madness. The faces of these necromancers served me for telegraphs. Did a yellow jaundice diffuse itself over their features, I was sure things were progressing satisfactorily, — that the good ship was under good headway! If they raised their humiliated faces to simper, and to explode imprecations against the constitution, which they called *prostitution*, I was certain the wind had shifted, and that it was now dead ahead!

By degrees a conspiracy was formed in the convent, to mortify my liberalism, and to transpierce my convictions. It was about the time that the Neapolitan troops, either from love or from force, blessed by the local authority, were departing for Lombardy in haste, in order to assist at the final expulsion of the Austrians. What a storm of sarcasms, of poisonous jokes, and of irony assailed me then in the refectory all the time we were at table! I often left the table, after the soup, and returned to my own room, strongly tempted to apply the torch to the convent, and thus consign to

ashes those wasps and hornets, and with them myself also.

It was just after one of these scenes, that I one day, while lying on my bed, with my mind bent on resistance, called my faithful conversa, and, taking her by the hand, asked her: —

"You say, Maria Giuseppa, that you will never be separated from me. Are you firmly resolved on this?"

"Ah, signora, do not doubt it!"

"If you love me so much, then, will you not also love all those who are my friends, and hate all those who are my enemies?"

"This you already know, by observation."

"Now, if I tell you that outside these walls I have many friends, and that they are as numerous as are the inhabitants of our beautiful country, who sigh for liberty and equality, how would you feel towards them?"

"I should love them for certain, both because you love them, and because they seek liberty and equality."

"Brava, Giuseppa!" I replied, and giving free vent to the sentiments which agitated my breast, I continued: "If, throwing aside these badges of egotism and inertia, and putting on those of the *vivandiere* of a regiment, I should say to you, 'Follow me, Giuseppa, to Lombardy, or to Venetia, or wherever strong blows are being struck for liberty, — where we are called, also, by our duty to our country, as mothers, or sisters, or citizens, — rather than continue in the service of these enemies of every

good;' would you not prefer, do you think, to assist in the infirmary, or the apothecaries' shop, or the bakery of the camp, or anywhere else where your services could aid those who go to immolate themselves for the benefit of all?"

"I would follow you with all my heart. I would follow you instantly," she answered, much excited, and drying, with her apron, the tears which bathed her cheeks.

I drew her to me, held her to my bosom, and kissed her. In this embrace, in this effusion of the affections, in this kiss of concord, the daughter of the plebeian and the daughter of the signore formed but a single person.

One day there happened in the public streets one of those unreasonable alarms, which, in times of political convulsions, frequently disturb the city of Naples. I, with two other nuns, curious to know the reason why the doors and the windows in the neighborhood were being shut so suddenly, ran hurriedly up into the campanile, from the top of which we could see all the neighboring *quartieri*.

There was a state of great excitement. Everybody was running hurriedly. Three young men only were going along the streets at their ease. Looking at us through the grating, one of them cried out, smiling as he did so: —

"Courage, little nuns! In a short time your imprisonment will be at an end!"

My satisfaction showed itself in my face. One of the nuns perceiving it, said: —

"You laugh. It is something rather to cry for."

"Cry, you who lose," I replied. "I, who gain, will laugh."

The abbess hearing of the occurrence, ordered the access to the campanile to be locked. But there were other accessible loop-holes in the convent, from which I could privately explore what was going on in the world outside; and I soon learned that the constitution which the king had accorded did not promise any reform in the matter of religion. He, faithless, and a dotard, obstinate, and a hypocrite, had not conceded liberty of culture, nor anything else from which I could hope to see these infamous monastic establishments, with which our country is both deluged and disgraced, suppressed.

The cry of "Viva Pio Nono!" in the streets was always an anchor of hope to me; and I often heard it. A pope who had at first declared himself, in the face of the world, the friend of liberty, could he continue to command the admiration of the Christian world without conceding some reform in ecclesiastical discipline, corresponding to the requirements of the time, and such as ought to suggest itself to his own convictions?

Encouraged by these reflections, I began another petition, to be consigned into the hands of the Holy Father himself. Throwing aside now the supplicating tone, I made use of a robust style, which better comported with the spirit of the age.

I said, ingenuously, that the monastic life was only a relic of oriental barbarism, and the monastery none other than a prison for those who had not entered it willingly. Not having committed any crime myself, either against God or man, I did not know by what inhuman law I ought to languish and die, from very desperation, in a prison; and that I still hoped to find a listener in the compassion of a pope, who had promised to Italy and to Christianity a new order of things. I concluded by saying, that if he should still persist in denying to me this prayer for justice, I would, at whatever risk, make use of the liberal press and other languages, to notify the entire world of the wrongs inflicted upon me. It was not the pope himself who was adverse to my appeal. The sacred congregation of the bishops and priests, upon whom it devolved to decide the question, with facility granted leave to such sisters, occasionally, when a physician certified that their health required it. The Holy See, then, had no motive in particular to deny my appeal. The obstacle existed in Naples, because the law required the vote of the Ordinario, in verification of the demand. Now, the cardinal, for reasons best known

to himself, obstinately opposed me. Two years and a half had already passed since I had been contending against his influence to no purpose.

The fifteenth of May arrived, — that day, ever to be remembered by Neapolitans, as one of the unlucky days in their calendar. No friend of human freedom remembers it without heaving a sigh for the brave and noble men who sacrificed their lives on that day in defence of freedom.

We anticipated, by a couple of hours, the time which we usually devoted to morning prayers; and the abbess gave us permission to go up to the lookout, where we could see the king, who was to pass by the church of San Lorenzo, that being the morning for the opening of parliament.

I had seen him in the month of January previous pass on horseback in the midst of the people. I had seen him, just as he was under the campanile of San Gregorio, untie his tri-colored cockade, which he wore on his breast, and hide it in his pocket, as he was then approaching the market, in order not to expose this emblem of the liberty he had just sworn to concede to the eyes of the populace, whose *ant-hill* was that particular *quartiere*.

This act, which was unnoticed by the other nuns, was a sad augury to me. At ten o'clock the portress came running up to say that the Toledo was being

barricaded, and that we must forthwith close the convent.

I ran immediately to the customary window of look-out. The National Guard, who were on picket duty at San Lorenzo, patrolled the street with sad faces. The sound of the firing of cannon convinced me that the affair was more serious than I had imagined. The humane (?), the faithful (?), the constitutional (?) prince was regaling his own capital of Naples with cannon-balls, and his subjects with grape-shot!

Several young gentlemen, mixing with the populace, raised two large barricades, — one under our campanile, and another at the corner of the Vicolo Cinque Santi.

The firing of cannon and of muskets continued meanwhile to increase. Several hours passed; but there was no cessation of the vomiting of cannon-balls and grape-shot upon the city and people of Naples.

After a time there was heard, faintly at first, but gradually growing louder, the cry of "Viva il Re!" and the nuns were jubilant, and danced for joy, clapping their hands. I trembled.

There could be no longer any doubt. Fortune had inclined in favor of despotism. The National Guard endeavored to escape, disguised. The drums beat the *generale* at every corner. All was confusion. I speedily betook myself to my own room, and, seizing the manuscript of so much of these memoirs as was then written, with other papers, committed them

to the flames. I was fearful that something might be discovered, which might involve both myself and my relatives.

In the mean time the cavalry were ordered to charge on the people. These same people, who had aided the liberals in the morning to construct barricades, crying, "*Viva la Nazione!*" even these same, destroyed them again in the evening, vociferating loudly for the perjured king!

The splendid palazzo Gravina, which had been set on fire by order of the Swiss mercenaries, and was now burning, shed the sinister light of its flames far and near. In the morning a white flag was spread to the breeze, over the smoking ruins of the edifice, in token of jubilee and of conquest.

The city was now placed in state of siege. It was, however, ordered by the police that everybody should hang out at the window, or from the balcony, some white emblem or token. The *berghinelle* of the market and the neighboring quartieri, noted for their dishonesty, went through the streets dressed in white and with garlands on their heads, half drunk, to the piazza in front of the Royal Palace, to congratulate the despot on his reported victory, as well as to have a great carousal with the soldiers whom they met by the way.

My position, meanwhile, was not without danger; all predicted that my name would be found on the books of

the police. Informers and testimony would have been easily obtained in the community of San Gregorio.

In this peril it pleased God to send me a helping hand. A capuchin monk, of venerable aspect, with a long, white beard, called me to the parlatorio. He said he had come from Rome and that he had been charged by His Holiness, to assign to me a *Breve d' uscita*, and at the same time to exhort me to patience, because my monastical standing had been reputed equivocal by the Holy See.

This Breve was not precisely what I expected. The Holy See had postponed to convenience a great part of the justice which I sought. In order not to bring bitterness to the Archbishop of Naples, who had always energetically resisted my prayers, — adducing the specious pretext that my mother received into her house persons suspected of atheism and of liberalism, — the Breve had, as it is said, two strings to its bow; it attempted to content me, on the one part, by according to me the privilege of going out of San Gregorio, and, on the other, of satisfying the cardinal by commanding that I should go, not to my mother's house, but into a conservatorio of my own selection. It was well understood, however, that I had the right to absent myself from the conservatorio every day, provided that I returned in the evening. Besides, it was this time formally ordered that the cardinal should be prohibited from interfering with his veto.

Although only half satisfied, I saw, nevertheless, that

to kick against what had been thus accorded to me would be the height of folly.

But to secure even this liberty I was obliged to employ my time actively. I was not ignorant of the proverb which says, *that if you would make good bread you must knead your dough thoroughly*. It was now beyond all doubt that the tide in my affairs had turned. I began to see land. That Breve of the pope had arrived seasonably. Now, in view of the fact that a messenger, *ad hoc*, had been sent by Pius IX. to speak with me in person, without the intervention of the superior authorities, it led me to believe that I was perhaps aided in Rome by some saint whose existence was unknown to me, and by whose means I had been enabled to render vain the insidious intentions of those who were disposed to throw new obstacles in my way.

I made an exact copy of the mandate for the cardinal. He took counsel with several canonici to discover, if possible, some means, some ingenious sophism, by which he could impede my leaving the convent; but the order was too explicit and would admit of no sort of cavil.

Some days after, he came to see me. I never knew him to carry his head more haughtily; always an index, among the Jesuits, of defeat!

After complaining some time of the violent war my mother had made on him, he said: —

"It is your determination, then, to leave the convent at all hazards?"

"It is my desire to leave and I *shall* leave."

"In that case you will please make up your mind into which conservatorio —"

"Do not trouble yourself about that, your Eminence," I said, cutting his speech short; "the selection belongs exclusively to me."

And indeed the selection of a conservatorio seemed to me, at first sight, an affair not worthy of much consideration. But who would have supposed that at the moment of setting my foot outside of my purgatory, a new and unexpected cord had been stretched by the priestly *camorra*, to trip me up?

Yet such was the fact. By the sisters in the different conservatorios my application was submitted to the most indecent and humiliating repulses. On the receipt of my application for admission, the authorities of each one of these receptacles sent to San Gregorio to inquire about me, and my reasons for making the application, etc., etc.

"Can we be favored with the true motive for which Sister Enrichetta desires to go from your convent into a conservatorio?"

"Eh, figliuola mia, who can tell? They say this thing and that about her, but —"

"They say that she sustains a bad name."

"Oh, no, quite otherwise. She possesses rare qualities; good, docile, generous, and a good friend, etc., etc. Nevertheless, there are those who make grave

charges against her, but everybody, you know, is talked about."

"For example, what do they say of her?"

"It is said that she procures and reads prohibited books; that, in an underhand manner, she supplies poisonous articles to the journals of the liberal party; that she sometimes leaves the coro, to write poetry in her own room; that she is hatching a project of ecclesiastical reform, which would have for its first effect the abolition of the monastic orders; that — that — that —"

Here the good woman buckled on a long string of formidable charges against me, then *suo jure*, condemned me to everlasting tortures, and then adjusted the slip-noose around my throat; and when she had me struggling between heaven and earth, she exclaimed, in a charitable tone: —

"Nevertheless, she is so good!"

At the sight of so frightful a portrait as this, who would consent to receive the original into his house?

I then turned to the *ritiri* of the lower class, and I found all their doors closed against me. Seeing myself surrounded by new machinations, and dismayed by the course affairs were taking, I wrote to the cardinal a short but pithy letter, to announce to him, that if he had not sufficient power to give effect to the orders of the pope, I would make an application to Rome myself.

The cardinal went immediately to the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli, and gave orders that their doors

should be opened to me forthwith. The sisters urged, in opposition, that they had no disposable room.

"Subterfuge!" said he; "no matter; then some one of you must cede her room to the Caracciolo."

There were plenty of rooms found then at my disposal; but, before being admitted, I was obliged to advance forty ducats as an entrance fee. I now proceeded to make the necessary preparations, assisted by Maria Giuseppa, who was as much elated as I was myself, at the prospect of the change.

The nuns of San Gregorio, not knowing in what other manner to show their spite towards me, finally succeeded in getting the authority of the cardinal to prohibit me from carrying away the articles of silver and other objects of value, which, according to the custom of that community, I had inherited from my aunts at their death.

The morning of January 28, 1849, two carriages stopped outside of the gate, in one of which was my mother; in the other, the vicar. I was very much affected at parting with a few of the older nuns of this convent, who had shown some compassion for me, — all women of the most sincere piety, — and when I asked their pardon, if I had at any time inadvertently caused them any molestation, they were moved to tears. I should have liked, too, to take formal leave, even of those who had made war upon me; but they were not to be seen; they had taken themselves out of the way.

I then descended to the church, bent my knees reverently before the high altar, and, raising my spirit to the throne of grace, I returned thanks with a profound heart. After nine years of cruel suffering, I finally recrossed that threshold which I hardly had dared to hope I should ever live to cross again.

"Come, be quick," said my mother, a little impatiently; "how long you have made me wait!"

She, on whose account I had already waited nine long years, could say this to me!

The carriages moved away. At a few steps from the gate, I turned to look once more at the high and naked walls of the convent, and the campanile and the steps and the pilasters of the temple. The noise made by the iron gate, as it swung to on its hinges, reminded me of the day when, by the same gate and a similar noise, I was separated from all that I held dear, and I found myself repeating the oft-quoted lines: —

"E come quei, che con lena affannata,
Uscito fuor del pelago alla riva,
Si volge all' acqua perigliosa, e guata;
Così l' animo mio, ch' ancor fuggiva,
Si volse indietro a rimirar lo passo,
Che non lasciò giammai persona viva." *

* As one, who, with suffocating breath,
Thrown from the mighty deep upon the shore,
Turns his eyes and gazes on the perilous waves;
So, mentally, did I, who still was fleeing,
Turn to look upon that strait
That none hath passed and lived.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONSERVATORIO DI COSTANTINOPOLI.

History of the establishment — Permission to go out daily in a carriage — The ferocious portress — Nominated canoness of Bavaria — The three parties in the conservatorio — Impertinence of the superior — Scenes with her — She receives a merited castigation and is terribly frightened, and benefits by the lesson she receives — My mother makes a personal application to the pope for my enlargement, and fails — The pope visits Naples — Comes to the convent of San Giovanni, whither we go to see him — I receive a special benediction from him — My poverty — Am obliged to live on black bread — The cardinal refuses to yield — Flight.

The sisters of the conservatorio waited for the new comers at the door. The ceremonies due to the vicar being terminated, and my mother having departed, they led me to the room of the abbess to dinner, as they had no refectory in common. Here I dined with the superiora and three other nuns, after which I was taken to the second floor, to the room which had been assigned to me, which was also near the church.

The city of Naples was devastated in 1526 by a horrible pestilence, which destroyed sixty thousand lives. On its disappearance, they voted to the *Madre di Dio* a small chapel. When, subsequently, in 1575, the same malady appeared again over all the rest of Italy, without arriving at Naples, it pleased the city to exchange the modest chapel for a temple, to which, in

1603, was added the conservatorio, — a noble, vast, and commodious fabric, situated in one of the most densely populated quarters of the city. I found there only a few inhabitants, fourteen oblates, twenty educande, and four converse. The oblates wore the habit of the Immaculate Conception, and the educande, besides being taught needle-work, received a little instruction in letters.

I had been for so long a time weaned from great crowds and thoroughfares, from the flux and reflux on the squares, and that clamorous chattering, that deafening noise of wheels, all characteristic of Naples, that I thought, at first, that I had somehow come out again from the shadow land into the living and breathing world. I felt my eyesight renewed, my lungs dilated, and my spirits soothed. I felt that I saw no longer before me that enormous wall of the clausura, which, for nine years, had compressed my chest and oppressed my respiration like an incubus. I heard the people pass, heard the noise of the carriages, pedlers, and soldiers. To the windows I could not go, because they were too high from the floor. I found myself in one of the finest streets of Naples, and I could easily imagine that I was lodged rather in a private house than in a convent. All, in short, seemed new to me; all singular and curious; the free air, the sounds, the light, the movements, and even the countenances of my fellow-creatures. My own person seemed to be a sort of

exotic, transplanted from a distant country, and I was even a curiosity to myself. Nor should I fear to be considered very *outré*, if, in order to depict that singular phase of my interior life, I should confess to having many times interrogated the looking-glass as to my personal identity.

The Breve permitted me to go out every morning; but the cardinal, who had been playfully nominated my Sir Hudson Lowe, prohibited me from going out on foot. My mother came, therefore, to take me in a carriage, kept me to dinner, and at sundown brought me back.

I have said that everything seemed new to me. Why should I not add, more humane? The air of San Gregorio was impregnated with the musty smell of the vaults for the dead, an atmosphere charged with a mephitic miasma, which, from all sides, infected the organism more or less acrimoniously and balefully. Returning to an atmosphere free and healthy, and to the society of relatives and friends, to the quiet communion of the senses, of the hopes, and of patriotic emotions, — restored, in a word, to the embraces of humanity, I soon experienced its beneficial influences.

By degrees my reason disentangled itself from the thick darkness which obscured it, and my heart, hiding itself in its inmost recesses, inflamed by sterile struggles, and become savage in its isolation, returned to become inebriated anew in the conceits of that super-

human harmony which is described as loving one's neighbor as one's self. Shall I confess it? I now began to see, for the first time, in what the Christian religion truly consists. Faith, which till now had, with a despotic empire, governed all my wishes; that faith which I had seen sullied in the practice of an imbecile piety, vituperated in hate of all who do not wear the insignia of the church; that faith I now felt to reflow within me in robust jets, in the free exercise of the faculties of the soul, in the efficacy of thought and of sentiment, and in the participation in the sufferings of others. What more? The notes, which in the moments of consecration and of elevation flowed from the organ, affected me profoundly, and ennobled me; and I never went out from the mass better disposed to charity than I did in these days, when I had the opportunity to respire the free air from which Christianity itself draws both life and vigor.

Better still would have been my new condition, but for two things which molested me. Public curiosity, which, attracted by the nun's habit which I wore, examined me as though I had been an animal from the menagerie; and in the conservatorio itself, where, instead of a nun of the coro for a portress, they had a ferocious conversa, but a little removed from the cannibal.

This woman might very well have figured in a menagerie on account of her form, which participated at

once in that of the animal human, and of the Siberian bear. Her forehead was not more than two inches high, her eyebrows were eternally contracted, her eyes diminutive and bloodshot, her nose flat, her mouth armed with formidable tusks, which projected outside of her lips, and with all, a snarling voice. When she looked at you, it was a menace; and when she spoke, it was a growl.

The gate of the convent was always closed at sundown. Any arrival five minutes later always put her in a fury; she ground her teeth, rolled her eyes wildly, and would mutter something in this fashion: —

"*Malnaggia* to the cardinal for the present he has made to the conservatorio of a nun who wants to go out every day!"

Towards the end of October following, the cardinal sent an order to the abbess, prohibiting me absolutely from going out! Behold me, then, reduced again to my former condition!

"Nuovi tormenti, e nuovi tormentati."

In response to one of my remonstrances, the cardinal came to see me, and said that it was not permitted to a nun to cross the corso in a carriage; nor, besides, was it right that the oblates of the conservatorio should be scandalized by my going out so much.

"What," he added, "would be the condition of our most holy religion, and, in particular, of the monastical

orders, if the nuns all felt, as you do, the necessity to go out every day into the open air?"

Irritated by this new act of cruelty, and taking shame to myself that I should be anew subjected to the tyranny of the proud priest who had again become the arbiter of my liberty, I determined to do everything I could in order to throw from my neck this ignoble yoke. To this end, it occurred to me to obtain, through an eminent friend, a diploma *di canonichessa*, which, if I should succeed, would secure me this preliminary advantage; God and circumstances would aid me to the complete reacquisition of freedom.

The noble and religious order of the Canonesses of Bavaria conforms to that of the Commanders of Malta, in denying matrimony to the women who belong to it, and in permitting those who remain single to reside in the bosoms of their own families. By the favor of the Prince Dendia, very potent at the court of Monaco, I obtained the nomination and the insignia in a very short time; and, in the hope of seeing me liberated by this means from all annoyance, my generous benefactor, General Salluzzi, paid the sum of two hundred and forty ducats.

One apprehension alone remained. Would the court of Naples accord the Royal Exequatur? By good fortune, the minister Fortunato signed the act of assent without a suspicion that I was a cloistral nun.

Obtaining this much thus easily, I took a further step

in advance. I endeavored to get from Rome a permission which should authorize me to pass from the order of San Benedetto to that of Sant' Anna delle canonichesse di Bavaria, but I became finally entangled in a priestly ambush. The cardinal answered me, facetiously, that I could wear the Bavaresi insignia over the dress of the Benedettine nun!

One disaster follows another, says the proverb.

The sisters of the conservatorio were divided into three parties. One was that of the abbess, composed of the oblate sisters, and superlatively bigoted and fanatical for the priests; the second, of the younger ones, not especially enemies to progress and civilization; the third was composed of the educande, who did not league with the first, nor sympathize with the second. The mutual animosity between the parties was carried to that degree among the nuns, that when they met in the garden, or on the corridor, they either turned their backs on each other, or one party retired entirely.

That sovereign of France was less puffed up with his own importance, when he said, *lo Stato son' io* (I am the State), than she who was the leader of the fanatical party; that is to say, the abbess was, in the exercise of her dominion over a few women. Stimulated by some natural ability, but petulant and intractable, niggardly as possible, and, above all, obstinate, ignorant, and a born bigot, she would have made excellent material for

a pope, if she had been born a man. Here is a picture which one of the sisters of the opposition, who was rather disposed to be severe, drew of her, on seeing her enter the saloon: "Behold the anti-pope!"

Prejudiced against me by the information she had already received from the nuns of San Gregorio, was it possible for me to remain in the conservatorio without becoming an object of the most vigilant espionage? The abbess perceived very soon my sympathy for the sisters of the liberal party, and I, of course, fell from her grace, and finally from the common courtesy of a passing salute. More than one evening, having gone to her, according to custom, to say, "Good-night," she did not deign to receive me; and I, as a consequence, took no more trouble to call on her again for that purpose. None of the nuns of her party noticed me any longer.

Although a stranger to that community, I conformed myself to their customs, and took a lively interest in their affairs. My benevolence and spontaneity in the matter were interpreted to my disadvantage by the abbess, who, forgetting that I was a *claustrale*, while she was only an oblate, attempted to rule me with a high hand, not otherwise than if I had been a little school-girl.

She saw on my table, one day, a couple of volumes of Cantù's history. She took them up, turned over several leaves yet uncut, then putting the book down, said: —

"I believe that these volumes are *political*, and, in consequence, excommunicated! and here, signora mia, I take this opportunity to declare to you, that books which are put in the Index cannot enter into my conservatorio."

Another time, a servant of our family called and asked for me, to give me a pair of buskins, which my sister had sent to me. I went out from the coro to receive them, and, seeing me talking with him, she said, with imperial gravity, and pointing towards the door: —

"The coro is the place for meditation. Remain there!"

I looked up at her to be certain that she was addressing herself to me. She was standing like a statue, with her eyes directed to my face. I then said to her: —

"You must know, signora, that impertinences to the Caracciolo are not suffered with impunity. I am neither an educanda nor a nun of the conservatorio. When I go to the coro, it is of my own accord. Now, since you exact it, I shall not go there again!"

A few days subsequently, an occasion presented itself for me to do a great service to this community, and laying aside my resentment at the rudeness of the abbess, I set about it cheerfully. It was thus: —

For many years the sisters of the French order of Vincent St. Paul had used a part of this conservatorio for a public school. Not contented with the portion which they already occupied, they laid claim to the

entire place and were about to succeed in obtaining it. The nuns of the conservatorio were in consternation at this danger, and, having no other protection, they thought of having recourse to the king.

By the influence of General Salluzzi, I speedily obtained an audience for the abbess and one for the governors of the conservatorio. Nor did I confine myself to this alone, for I asked the general to make a special application; and a royal decree was speedily issued favorable to my hosts.

But that these people were like the cat which responds to caresses with a scratch, was a little later demonstrated to me. Shut up in a convent as I was at eighteen years of age, I had only half completed my studies. Teachers and books being prohibited in the convent, I had not been able to cultivate the study of letters by myself and in secret. Now my condition was changed; and having, like all Neapolitans, a passion for music, I bought a piano-forte, intending to resume my former practice.

If a bombshell had fallen in the conservatorio it would not have produced more consternation than that innocent instrument did. The bigots armed themselves with scruples, and, in order to avoid their murmurs and maledictions, I restricted myself to playing only. But that was not enough. They sought a pretext to make me despise their conservatorio, it was clear.

I was one day practising the introduction to the

Tyrolese of William Tell. Maria Giuseppa came running to tell me that the abbess was in a fury against me.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because, she says the nuns are scandalized by the piano-forte and that it cannot be permitted any longer, music having always been prohibited in the conservatorio."

I went immediately to the room of the abbess, who received me without even inviting me to take a seat. No oriental caliph could have composed himself to greater stateliness and gravity to receive one of his subjects.

"From my conversa," I said, "I received your message."

"Yes," she replied, "I am very much dissatisfied with you for the scandal which your playing on the piano produces."

"I do not, indeed, understand how simple piano-forte-playing can scandalize any one."

"Yesterday you were playing a *Tarantella*."

Here I laughed, unintentionally.

"In the first place," I said, "I have not played any such thing. It was a piece of music of Rossini; you, not understanding music, have been mistaken. But that aside; if, instead of serious music, I had played a Tarantella, or the aria of a love song, is not the same or similar music executed on the organ in every church during the time of mass and of the benediction?"

"This badinage I do not understand," and, stamping her feet and gesticulating, she added: —

"The cardinal told me that you would not stay here more than six months, and it is now already more than a year that you have been here, and nothing is yet said about your going away."

I now made up my mind to castigate the proud imbecile. We were quite alone. I assumed an affable manner, softened my voice, and, approaching her mysteriously, said: —

"Good mother, if any one should hear you speak thus severely to me, he would believe, certainly, that you were impatient to get rid of me. Now, who is there in this community that does not know the sincere affection which you entertain for me, — the maternal care which you take of me? Better than any one else, I know that I pay you the same amount of money; that I respond to you with equal benevolence — "

"Since when?" she asked, smiling sardonically.

"I gave you proof of it some weeks ago; I will now give you another and more positive one. It is no longer now the question of being able to retain this property; but your own honor, your position, and perhaps even your liberty may be at this moment in — "

"Gesù, Gesù, Gesù!" she exclaimed, terrified; "do they threaten my position, my liberty? What do you know of these things, figlia mia? I hope you would not make fun of me."

"There is impending over you, I fear, a tremendous and irreparable misfortune."

"Speak, for mercy's sake!"

"A danger, horrifying and frightful."

"The blood freezes in my veins."

"Poor creature! the loss of the abbessate will be as nothing compared to the other troubles which await you. You may be taken to prison by the police; may be obliged to sit in the seat assigned to crim—"

"Gesù, Gesù!"

"—You may be condemned to the galleys, or at least to solitary confinement, with an enormous chain at your ankle."

"Gesù, Gesù!"

"—Put perhaps on bread and water, and compelled to sweep the streets, to pick—"

I should have tormented her longer if I had not discovered that she was near fainting. The unhappy creature trembled from head to foot, her breath was failing her, and she looked pale as a corpse.

When I found that she was a little recovered, I continued:—

"You are not ignorant, good mother, of the immense good-will the French nuns entertain for you."

"Let them keep their good-will to themselves," answered the malignant old woman, in a weak voice, depressed now from the apex of pride to the depths of despair.

"The old tradition well says:—

'From Spaniards and Imperialists,
From French and Cardinals,
Libera nos, Domine.'

"But to come to the point: They say that at the meeting you had with his majesty, you attempted to blacken the reputation of your rivals of San Vincenzo. The king took note of it, to make a public laughing-stock of them, and of you, also. As soon as the French nuns received a hint of the calumny, they were ready and resolute to return blow for blow. They have already concerted their plan of attack; the accusation is made, the French minister and all the subjects of the republic are in motion, the police are on foot, the capital is in a hubbub, while you occupy your own time with these miserable trifles."

She placed her hands upon the table to help herself to her feet; but she had not the strength to rise, and fell back heavily on her seat.

"I may at least be permitted to know of what crime these wretches accuse me," she demanded, more dead than alive from fright.

"Of conspiracy; of liberalism; of high treason. A conspiracy in your conservatorio . . . liberal nuns . . and you their Masaniello . . . testimony taken by the inspectors . . . letters intercepted . . . documents which tell the story . . . proofs and indications indis-

putable. Poor creature, to what a sad condition you have arrived!"

"*Miserere mei Deus!* I, Masaniello! I, guilty of high treason! What execrable machinations!"

"These are the charges."

"Do you believe there is any help for me?"

"Alas, I fear not!"

"And the sisters of the conservatorio?"

"Are for the most part your enemies."

"And you, dear and good creature, you faithful and generous Enrichetta?"

At this point, I ran to the window, and from the window to the door, half opened it, listened, and then returned in haste to the abbess.

"The police! the police!" I cried, wildly. "They are coming in, even now; they are at the gate!"

"The police, reverenda, are entering the conservatorio, with fixed bayonets!" cried Maria Giuseppa, who had heard all; and opening the door wide, precipitated herself into the room.

The old woman, stimulated by the terror of an imminent catastrophe, did her utmost to rise and support herself on her feet, and succeeded; moved a step in advance, and throwing herself at my feet, and embracing my knees convulsively, said: —

"To you, my faithful friend, and to you alone, I commit myself. Save me! Was it not you who saved the convent from invasion by these powerful French? Ah!

lend me, once more, your magnanimous aid. In you alone I repose the hope of my safety, angel of goodness!"

My efforts to raise her from that humble position were vain; she continued only the more closely to cling to my knees.

"I am sorry, reverenda," I said, then, "that I cannot help you this time. Having just been dismissed by you, and being obliged to go, I am constrained to abandon you to the horrid destiny that awaits you."

"No, no, do not go away; do not abandon me, I beseech you. Remain here, and play and sing as much as you please.

"Oh, no, no! I must go away."

"I will not permit it. No, stay, for mercy's sake."

I then concluded the comedy with a hearty laugh, and taking her by the arm, I raised her from the floor.

"Henceforth," I said to her, reassuming a serious tone, and placing her on a chair, "henceforth, do not assume quite so haughty manners, if you do not wish to be humbled in the dust. This fright may serve you for a lesson. As for me, I will keep my word; I am determined to leave your conservatorio; but I shall do it at my own convenience, and not at all to suit you."

To aid her to recover herself a little, I called for a glass of water and gave it her to drink. Then, with a most amiable submission, she regarded me awhile attentively, and, holding out her hand, said: —

"I hope that no account of this scene will find its way into the public prints. Let me be assured of this, — another glass of water, please."

From that time forward I passed my time, not happily, but free from molestation, nor had I any more occasion to complain of the eccentricities of the superiora. As to the police, — that was a chance in store for me, not for her.

The liberal cause in Italy was being precipitated to fatal ruin. Charles Albert had just been beaten by the Austrians at Novara, and was obliged to abdicate, and to abandon Italy. The pontifical court, encouraged by that defeat, invoked from Gaeta the assistance of the Catholic governments for aid to repossess itself of Rome and Austria. Spain and France had already responded to the call. In Tuscany, the dominion of the Grand Duke had been re-established by a rising of the people in favor of the old regime; whilst Venice, abandoned to herself, and Rome, closely besieged, struggled with their oppressors; the first against the Austrians, the other against the French, with heroic efforts of bravery.

Although profoundly afflicted by the unhappy condition of Italy, I did not lose sight of the hope of cutting short my connection with the Benedettine order. In answer to my prayers, my mother went to Gaeta to present to Pius IX. a petition, in which I asked of His Holiness an act of secularization, with the pledge to

remain bound by my vows not otherwise than as a simple canonichessa. And as the nuns of San Gregorio had made a claim for indemnification against my relative, who had given his obligation in my favor, at the time of my taking the veil, to the amount of a thousand ducats, I implored His Holiness, besides, that he might be declared exonerated from this unjust exaction.

Pius IX. seemed to be moved by the entreaties of my mother, and the prayers of my younger sisters. He turned around to look for writing materials; and, as he could not at that moment lay hands upon them, he directed my mother to return two days later for his answer.

Meantime my persecutor, the archbishop and cardinal, hearing of this new attempt of mine, departed in great haste from Naples for Gaeta, and arrived there, bearer of that famous letter which I had addressed to the pope, under the seal of the confession, — which he had intercepted and opened!

On the day appointed, my mother returned to the pope. She found him changed. "Signora," said he, gravely, "let your daughter be contented with what she has already obtained. Who seeks too much, finds nothing. She would like to change her habit and condition. We cannot consent to it. What would the other nuns say, or do, who are bound in the same manner? We had forgotten her name, day before yesterday. The Cardinal Riario has reminded us of it, and

we have ourselves to-day read a petition which she addressed to us two years ago!"

It was quite evident now that my affairs, like those of poor Italy, were on the road to ruin.

About a month later, there came a Pontifical Breve to me through the cardinal, by which Pius IX. conceded to me the *grazia* to remain in a conservatorio, under the conditions of the clausura, permitting me, however, to go out during the summer season for the baths, provided my physician ordered it, and it should please the archbishop to allow it. As to the claim of the nuns of San Gregorio on my relative, it was ordered that it must be paid over to the convent, but that I should receive, during my life, from the convent, a monthly assignment, proportioned to the sum which I had paid.

Until now, I had received for my maintenance fourteen and a half ducats a month; henceforth I could see only a monthly stipend of six ducats, with which I must supply food for myself and my conversa! Such is the charity and justice of the nuns!

Necessity, however, knows no law. I was forced now to make my dinner from a single plate, and to accustom my palate to black bread! This I was compelled to do, while my persecutor, decked in purple and fine linen, the author of my indigence, was giving sumptuous dinners to papal parasites, his colleagues, fugitives from Rome, who hung around the Bourbons,

in order that they might together contrive the means to fasten the chains more securely on the people of Italy, which were destined, ultimately, to bind them fast!

Pius IX. came to Naples. He could change his place as well as his color and sentiments. Although he went out in public frequently, I deemed it superfluous, and even dangerous, to have recourse again to his compassion. He who had shut his eyes to the groans of his country, could he be expected to open them to the lamentations of a poor nun? And flanked as he was by Ferdinand II. on one side, and a Riario on the other, how could he listen, even had he been willing, to my petition?

It was only the fanaticism of the lowest Neapolitan plebeians which still supported the tottering thrones of these two vulgar enemies of human rights. And the sovereign of Rome, weak of heart and weaker still of mind, thirsty for popularity and incapable of acquiring it durably, set the leaky boat of the poor church to towing their miserable galley!

One evening, about sundown, as I was returning to the conservatorio, the police forbade my carriage to cross the piazza delle Pigne. The pope was in the museum of pagan antiquities, where the prince royal was enacting the cicerone, and it was not possible to open a passage through the crowd, without danger that the horses would trample upon the people. I was obliged, there-

fore, to make a very long detour, descending by the Vicaria and going up again by San Pietro a Majella. This involuntary delay excited the fury of the portress of the conservatorio, who, staring at me through her squinting and bloodshot eyes, which made my hair stand on end, said to me: —

"If we have the misfortune to have you with us another year, by my faith in God, you shall not put your foot outside this door;" saying which, she raised her index-finger in the manner of a chapel-master.

Before leaving Naples, the pope expressed the wish to visit the different convents of clausura, each in its turn. When he was about to visit the convent of San Giovanni, the sisters of Costantinopoli manifested to the sisters of the other convent their desire for an opportunity to see the pope in a place which, from its proximity, would be so convenient for them. Their request was granted. The pope arrived, and, going out upon the terrace, blessed, comprehensively, all the crowd around him. I do not know what attracted his attention to me, but, looking at me attentively, he said: —

"A particular benediction on the cloistral nun!"

This, I am sorry to say, brought me no comfort. I needed health, tranquillity, and emancipation from ignoble servitude. Now, which of these benefits did this benediction confer upon me?

In a few days Pius IX. returned to Rome, thanks to

foreign bayonets, joyous as was his predecessor, who, at the fall of Rienzi, returned as bishop and master of the Eternal City. The cardinal selected this moment to renew his war upon me.

I was told that the utmost rigors of the clausura were about to be visited upon me; that it was proposed soon to restore me to my first prison; and that I must renounce, at once and forever, all hope of freedom, and resign myself to the condition of the other nuns, and not attempt again to recover any further liberty; and, in compensation for this act of abdication, I was to be permitted to see, dimly, in the shadowy future, the honor of an abbessate, which, by a special Breve, notwithstanding my age, I was to obtain.

How much more attractive to me was the certainty of black bread, which I divided with my good and faithful Maria Giuseppa! I replied to the cardinal, that I preferred to sojourn free in a cabin rather than be an abbess in a prison!

How did His Eminence reply? By taking from me even the pitiful monthly pittance of six ducats!

I was left, then, as the Tuscans say, "on the sands of Barbary." Of needle-work I knew a little, and "God who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," had not deprived me of industry nor ability. I should have preferred to earn my livelihood by the work of my own hands, rather than to depend upon the charity of the nuns of the conservatorio, or of any one else. But

how can one expect to find anything to do in the enemy's house, and while groping about in the darkness which overshadows the future?

To one of my relatives who taxed the cardinal with his cowardly persecution of a woman, impenetrable as flint, he replied: —

"Her mother is rich; let her provide for her!"

Extended on this Procrustean bed, — squeezed in, to say better, between the door and the wall, — and destitute, finally, of the means of subsistence, I had recourse again to my native energy of mind, and determined to seek an escape by any means, however desperate.

One evening, instead of returning to the convent according to custom, I notified the abbess, by letter, that she might close the door at night without waiting my return, for I was not willing any longer to eat the bread of others, and should, for the future, remain in my mother's house.

CHAPTER XX.

L'ANNUNZIATA DI CAPUA.

The cardinal astonished — He arranges with the police for my arrest. - A dream — Reflections — Begin a letter to the cardinal — Resolve to fly to Capua — My mother accompanies me — Reception by Cardinal Capano — Enter the Annunziata — Horrible moral condition of the institution — The abbess — Dialogue with one of these women — Revelations of another — Her superstition.

My letter to the abbess was at once despatched by the nuns at Costantinopoli to the cardinal, who was, as might readily be supposed, not a little astonished; nor could he be easily persuaded that my flight was real.

The first explosion of his wrath fell upon the head of my confessor, who was bitterly reproved for not having anticipated and prevented such an escapade.

Frightened at the vindictive instincts of the cardinal, the canonico wrote me a note, in a trembling hand, in which he supplicated me to return at once to the conservatorio. I replied briefly, advising him to give himself no further trouble on my account, and to notify his superior, if he pleased, that he no longer wished to direct the conscience of a rebellious nun. This second suggestion was not intended as a mere pretext; for in my rage against the clerical despotism, under which

my country was suffering, I did not feel it at all incumbent on me any longer to employ a confessor.

More than a week passed, and everything remained quiet. In the morning I rode out with my mother in a carriage; in the evening, as there was always company in our parlor, I remained in my own room, in which I received only a few ladies, with whom I was intimately acquainted.

Soon after, however, I received a letter from the vicar, by which I was informed that a canonico, expressly charged by the cardinal, would come on the day following to talk with me.

He came, according to appointment, and began to exhort me in the name of all the saints of both sexes; to proffer me flatteries and promises; then to hurl menaces; and counselled me, finally, to return promptly to my cage again. I answered him distinctly, "NO!" He added that if the motive for my flight was the suspension of the monthly assignment of six ducats, that that should be restored to me, without fail, as soon as I had returned to my obedience, separated myself from my relatives, and secluded myself again in the convent.

His Eminence was willing to concede to me, as a favor, that only which was my just due. The canonico wasted his breath for another hour, endeavoring to persuade me that my soul was in danger of damnation, and that to disobey the cardinal was the same as to consign one's self directly to the devil.

I replied that my conscience was clearer, I presumed, than that of his cardinal. He might very properly fear the flames of eternal fire for having so long enacted the despot; for what right had he, knowing my repugnance for the seclusion, to make my freedom an affair of state?

The ambassador perceiving, that instead of dealing blows in this encounter, he had received some, excused himself and departed.

After this, I remained two weeks longer in peace. My mother lived at this time in the palazzo Ripa, at Ponte Nuovo, where my friendships were confined strictly to the princess, who was the owner of the palace, and General Torchiarlo, another tenant of the house, and a person of some distinction.

The princess came to see me one evening, and told me she had learned from the general that Riario, after having had a secret colloquy with the king, had given Peccheneda, director of the police, orders to have me arrested.

What kind of feeling could it have been which instigated these people to give me this information? Perhaps liberal sympathies! Alas! Very bigoted and much devoted to the Bourbonic dynasty as they were, could they have anything in common with a nun who was in rebellion against the institution which oppressed her?

I remember of having heard, even, that a signora of their family had held a secret conference with doc-

tors and casuists, about a case of conscience of great importance; if, that is to say, living in the same house with me, she incurred thereby the risk of excommunication; and the conclusion arrived at by the coterie was, that she might do so, provided that she avoided speaking to or noticing me! Their anxiety, therefore, to notify me of the design of the cardinal, proceeded from the fear of having an arrest made in their palazzo, and nothing else!

It remained for me to decide now what I should do, or what step I should take next; and I speedily determined to forestall the arrest by escape. But whither should I fly? Any other secure asylum, than that of some other bishopric in which I could preserve myself from the claws of the cardinal, I could not hope to find. Where then should I look for some generous bishop who might extend to me his hospitality and protection? After a long consideration of the matter, I remembered that the Cardinal of Capua, Capano Serra, was a man of rare goodness, and I determined to have recourse to him. We passed a very anxious night; every moment I was running to the window to see if the police were coming, and I thought I heard the door-bell ring a thousand times and people coming up the stairs.

The night air was very heavy and suffocating. A sudden gust of wind, which in its course through the streets formed itself into numerous little whirlwinds, taking up clouds of dust, threatened at every new puff

to extinguish the lamp which was burning before a picture of the Madonna at the corner of the street. The sky was everywhere obscured and the blackness of darkness reigned all around; everybody in the neighborhood was asleep; the streets were deserted, and no other sound was to be heard but the slow and measured step of the patrol.

My mother was sleeping on the sofa; she had not undressed herself. Towards two o'clock, while seated at the window with my head resting against the blinds, I became drowsy and had a frightful dream. Three men seemed to be seizing me; one by the arm, another by the head, and the third, by the throat; they dragged me down the marble stairs of the palazzo, pulling me by the hair and dealing me heavy blows with their hands.

I awoke and was seized with chills immediately, which succeeded each other rapidly, accompanied with a violent palpitation of the heart and the cramp in my throat; signs of a nervous crisis which a moment later seized me. Were these convulsions violent or of long duration? I do not know; no one else knew that I had them. I found myself, on my recovery, on the floor, my flesh bruised and paining me terribly, and far more wretched still in spirit than in body.

Many sad fears, many sad thoughts, unknown to me till now, took possession of my mind and disturbed my conscience. Carefully looking at this escape

of mine, it now seemed to me only a provisional relief, since the police must sooner or later get upon my track; and I thought that to run away, would prove to be a course as vain as it would be stupid and injurious, and I began to question whether I were not going too far in my foolish resistance.

Where should I go? What should I do? I asked myself. Why should I whirl myself around the world a fugitive and at a venture? Were not the fatal vows which separated me from mother and sisters sufficient? Should I dig still deeper with my own hands the abyss of my isolation? Were I a man, very different indeed would be my struggle with inexorable destiny! But a woman — and a woman in the eyes of the world reprobated for having too hastily repudiated human society; poor, sick, and without counsel, or a single pitying hand to snatch me from the abyss into which I was sinking and suffocating; what or how much resistance could I oppose to the combined persecutions of two powers, which with a dogged pertinacity still pursued me?

The sleep which my mother and sisters were enjoying whilst I was awake and abandoned to my own sad thoughts, and struggling with contrary affections, and the dark silence which surrounded me as if to separate me the sooner from the association with those who were dear to me, only served to render the picture of my exile more horrid and frightful.

Rather than walk from door to door and beg the bitter

bread of exile, would it not be better for me, I said to myself, to yield to destiny and resign myself to the hard necessity; placate with dissimulation the ire of my superiors; with complaisance insinuate myself into their good graces, and, if not able to break the chain, at least make it a degree lighter to my limbs. Transported by moral amendment, assured by my devotion, not only would they leave me in peace, but would they not shower upon me favors besides; accord me rank, power, and dignities? Finally, would not an abbessate prove to be a pasturage wretched enough for the ambition of a poor nun?

I arose hurriedly, lighted my lamp, took from the writing-desk a sheet of paper, and, dipping my pen into the ink, with a hand still trembling from the effect of convulsions, I wrote the following lines, which I shall never forget: —

"EMINENZA: — *Everybody is subject to deviate from the right path. Our Lord Jesus Christ alone was born without sin. Misled myself by wicked temptations*" . . . .

Here my pen stopped abruptly, then it fell from my hand on the paper, and for a long time I remained with my head resting on the table.

"Wretch!" I exclaimed, finally, jumping to my feet and tearing the paper to pieces. "Wretch!" I exclaimed, "is not the chain which you are dragging at

your feet, sufficient, without now consenting to have another placed around your neck? Have you then aspired to freedom only to desert the ship at the moment of conflict? Where are honor, generous aspirations, faith, and courage? What have you done with your heart and with your conscience? Even though you should remain deaf to the groans of your country, do you think you can suffocate the voice of conscience? Why do you not take counsel and comfort from the history of your own country?

"Goaded by opposing passions, governed by weak wishes, abandoned to the seductions of other than her own family, enticed on every side, miserable Italy fell into vassalage, as you have but now proposed to do. Then also she languished for a time, imprisoned in the cloister, which princes, spiritual and temporal, built for her; she cried, she implored, she protested. Conformable to hers, also, are your vicissitudes, common is the expiation, common the vows of renovation, common also the recent efforts to recover the exercise of her own will, — and now you would recede! And at what a moment! On the day before the redemption, whilst the shadow of tyranny is already beginning to disappear before the splendor of young and regenerated Italy!"

At daybreak I left Naples for Capua with my mother. The Cardinal Capano received me with rare politeness; he was a man very accessible, void of prejudices and

superior to petty revenge. He promised me his protection and, after listening to a relation of my troubles, assured me that he would, as far as was in his power, assist me to release myself from this unhappy condition.

The afternoon of the same day he sent his vicar to me to place himself *en rapport* with me. I found him to be a very respectable priest. Not content with receiving my confession, which I laid at his feet, bathed in tears, he desired, besides, to bring me on the morrow to the archbishop, in order that I might relate to him the story of my life.

Being satisfied that I had been influenced only by noble and pure motives, he asked me for the pontifical Breves which I had received thus far. These briefs had been left at home, in our hurry, and my mother therefore determined to return to Naples and send them to me; and, as this would necessarily occupy some days, the good vicar counselled that, meanwhile, I should enter a ritiri of the city, free to go out of it at all hours of the day, provided that I returned at night to sleep. One of these establishments bore the name of "l' Annunziata." The vicar besought me not to prejudge the institution because of its name, for although the *proiette* (Magdalens) were received and cared for there, there were, besides, a small number of *religiose* who, of course, did not belong to that class at all. A portion of the furniture necessary for my room was gracefully tendered to me by the vicar, and the remainder I hired

from the public house. Maria Giuseppa, who still accompanied me, entered here with me, and my mother, two days after, returned to Naples.

Many attentions were shown to me by the abbess of the establishment. The servant of the vicar came every day to know if I had any orders to give him, and the cardinal had instructed the nuns, as well as the young women, to show me every possible attention. On this account, they gave me the title of "Eccellenza."

Meantime, some days passed before Riario discovered my place of refuge. Ascertaining it, finally, he bit his nails with rage, and wrote a letter to Capano, filled with impertinent reproofs for having given me asylum. The latter replied, that to receive an honorable religiosa, who was not otherwise discontented with her condition than as it respected the treatment she had received from her superior (but who was not, as his letter intimated, a fugitive from prison, guilty of some enormous crime), was an act on his part for which the Archbishop of Naples should thank, rather than censure him.

Riario smothered his wrath, to use it at a more opportune season.

We come now to the ignoble ritiro into which my destiny had finally thrust me.

The Annunziata of Capua is very large, with extensive buildings and a very beautiful church. The nuns occupy separate rooms; but the *proiette* sleep all crowded together, in long and dark corridors, into which one

cannot penetrate without becoming disgusted. There were three hundred of these women here at this time.

I was unfavorably impressed with the squalor, filth, and misery, everywhere apparent, of these victims of an incautious love. Void of every domestic, or any other virtue, which can ennoble the sex, — destitute of all elementary instruction, — rude, garrulous, petulant, and slothful, they lived here, confined in one large room, and appeared more like a herd of brute animals, than a family of reasonable beings, living in a Christian land, and united under the auspices of the church, with the object of moral reform.

To this disagreeable picture was added the nauseating indecency of the familiarity which they kept up with the soldiers of the garrison. Nor could the abbess of the nuns, who was also the superiora of the proiettes, succeed in placing any restraint upon their conduct, in this respect. Having become austere and intractable, either from infirmity or from the arduous and disagreeable nature of the duties which the position demanded of her, she had lost all the prudence and affability of her nature, which were indispensable to the administration of an institution composed of materials so raked together and anomalous as these were.

Capua was, at this time, also afflicted with serious disturbances. The prisoners had revolted, and the students of the seminary had done the same thing, and had already attempted the life of the rector, and they

were now threatening the unfortunates of the Annunziata, and had actually resolved upon nothing less than the death of the poor old abbess. It was intimated, too, that they designed to pay their respects to me.

A wicked trap was laid one day, by one of the inmates, to kill the abbess. There was a room up over the main stairway, formed in the shape of a tunnel, — a passage-way rather dangerous than otherwise. The vile creature who designed this wicked deed, placed herself in ambush, at an upper window, and, at the moment the abbess was about to pass through the passage, upset a very heavy flower-vase, with the intention of having it fall perpendicularly upon her head. The poor abbess owed her escape from instant death only to having stopped a moment as she entered the door, and was about to take the fatal step which would have been her last.

One morning, subsequently, she found two large, black crosses painted over a skull, on the door, which is a menace of death.

These women placed in operation every means of seduction, in order to attract my conversa to their conventicle; but Maria Giuseppa, who for probity and wisdom made an exception to the proverb, not only absurd, but false, which says, "*that thy greatest enemy, after thy brother, is thy servant*,"—Maria Giuseppa, I say, far from listening to their overtures, was a most rigid censor of their behavior. She blamed them

severely, on an occasion when, the abbess having been confirmed for another term in her office by her superiors, these creatures rang the bell, as if for a funeral.

They made even worse of another circumstance. On the evening of a festa, the superiora prohibited these wretches from going up to the lookout on pretence of seeing the fireworks (the indispensable condiment to the religious festa under this government), but with the real object, as she knew, to communicate by signs with the soldiers at head-quarters. They were terribly enraged at this prohibition, and, heaping up a pile of a dozen of their straw mattresses against the abbess' door, they applied a torch, and, as the straw began to burn, they began to jump over it, in the style of the ragged boys and loafers of Naples, when, gathered together in the streets, they set fire to and have a regular carousal over the piles of straw which have been thrown out from the stables.

Who, in seeing from a distance, these ragged and stockingless creatures, with dishevelled hair and brutal features, infuriated to that extent by excitement and drink, could get rid of the idea that he was present at a mysterious vigil of witches and hobgoblins?

One day, meeting one of these creatures of the convent who was noisier than any of the rest, who was also young, very thin and bony, and whose tongue was never

still, I besought her to endeavor to keep herself a little more quiet. After kissing my hand,* she said: —

"Eccellenza, I am noisy and impudent on purpose."

"You are jesting with me!"

"*Gnorandò;* I am saucy in order to secure a husband!"

"I do not understand you!"

"Eccellenza, yes. One who does not play the fool here, runs the risk of remaining forever single. In this Annunziata here, nothing is done as it is in that of Naples, where the young men select their wives by throwing down their pocket-handkerchiefs before the girl they prefer. Here, the men (handsome and ugly, young and old, it matters little) come to the parlatorio; the superiora then calls us out by name, one after the other, until the purchaser becomes sick of the offered goods. Now you must know that this cunning old woman calls first to the parlatorio those who have irritated her the most!"

"Why?"

"To get rid of them the sooner!"

I could not refrain from laughing. When I met the superiora again, who frequently counselled with me how she might best regulate the affairs of that pandemomium, I suggested to her the expedient of calling the girls, not

* It is a mark of great respect in Italy, towards a person of superior rank, to seize the hand and kiss it. When a priest or monk goes along the street, it is common to see women and children take hold of his hand and kiss it. He, as a matter of course, blesses them in return.

thus arbitrarily, but by their ages; for, in that way, she would be sure to disappoint those who were behaving badly on speculation.

Every day one of the young girls used to come to my room to wish me good-morning. She was always pale and melancholy, and her aspect seemed to hide some mystery which it was difficult to understand. I inquired if she was suffering from any indisposition. She hesitated, at first, to answer; but then, in an incoherent manner, she revealed to me, as a great secret, that she was a victim to witchcraft. I took pains to explain to her, as well as I could, that that was nothing but an imposture, and that she must not believe in it; but I soon perceived that it was only *pounding water in the mortar*, as they say; because the poor girl was fixed in her belief.

Having besought her to tell me how she supposed she had become infected with this hallucination, she consented. It was in this wise: She had, she said, been enamored, some years before, with a young man, who was suddenly called to Naples with his employer. Before separating from him, which she did at some distance from the city, they bound themselves to each other by the most solemn oaths. But she, faithless to her vows to the youth, came to Capua, and here formed a friendship with a sergeant, and violated her oath. As soon as her former lover heard of this infraction, he flew to Capua, and, feigning to treat her the same as if nothing

had happened, invited her to dinner, and gave her some pastry he had brought with him from Naples. The day after, assuring himself that the faithless girl had eaten the pastry, he threw off the mask, and, taxing her with her faithlessness, said, "Now I am revenged! Already the witchcraft is at work in your stomach. Adieu!"

From that day, the poor creature's reason had been unsettled. An extreme confusion of ideas and of sentiments had reduced her to that deplorable condition.

"But why," I asked, "do you obstinately attribute to enchantment that which may be only the effect of a mere combination of circumstances, or of some poison put in the pastry?"

"No, no!" she replied. "I have a devil in my body! I cannot enter a church, nor approach the sacrament!"

"Come with me, then. I will take you to the coro itself. This devil will be afraid of me!"

"No, no; for pity's sake! I cannot; I would sooner die!"

I seized her by the hand, and, almost dragging her along, led her down the stairs. She cried, trembled, imprecated, and attempted to release herself. After a long resistance, which was redoubled at the door, we finally entered. I forced her to kneel at the foot of the altar. She uttered a frightful shriek, and fled!

Poor Naples! A century will not suffice to extirpate the ferocious superstitions with which thy people are beset!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ARREST.

Sad days in the Annunziata — Cardinal Capano endorses my application to the pope, and recommends my secularization — His sudden death, which is a death-blow to my hopes — Return to Naples — Father Spaccapietra — Some months of truce — My mother goes to Gaeta, and I to live with a married sister — My complicity with the liberal movement — My arrest — Consigned to the Ritiro di Mondragone — My servant not permitted to accompany me — Il Morbili — Filthy condition of the institution — Gallantry of a priest repulsed.

Sad were the days of my residence at the Annunziata; sadder still the nights, preoccupied as I was with the uncertain future.

On the receipt of my papers from Naples, the cardinal wrote a long letter to send with them to the congregation of Bishops and Regolari at Rome. The worthy prelate supported my demand for secularization, enumerating the wrongs and the imprudences of Riario, and concluded by saying, that as I had no natural disposition or vocation for the veil, he esteemed it a miracle that, goaded to the extreme of desperation, I had not failed to conform to the principal rules of the monastic order; and, seeing the impossibility of persuading me to enter the cloister again, he believed it to be due to me, and just, besides, that, for the remainder of my life, I should be permitted to lay off the Benedettine habit,

and to dress simply in black, and live in the house of my mother with the title of canonichessa.

After reading the letter, which I did in the cardinal's presence, I thanked him sincerely for it, then saw it properly sealed by the vicar himself, who then placed it in a desk to wait the day for the post, after which, in a very contented mood of mind, I returned to the Annunziata.

Maria Giuseppa abandoned herself to a childish joy. She thought that all our troubles were now ended, and so it really appeared. That evening we sat up until a late hour, immersed in the pleasure, so dear to the miserable, of indulging in golden dreams for the future. But of what value are projects, even though substantial and mature, when the issue does not second them.

Two days subsequently, I learned that Cardinal Capano had taken to his bed with illness. This news alarmed me. Five days after, he was dead!

And my papers? Still in his desk. And the vicar? Suspended, and a new superior appointed provisionally, an enemy of Capano. And the successor of the cardinal? Cosenza!

Adieu, then, to hope!

What could I do further in Capua? I was on thorns for the next fifteen days. The ex-vicar counselled me not to remain here any longer, because, knowing me to have been protected by Capano, Riario would not fail now to renew the interrupted thread of persecution.

Besides, I had no means to tempt fortune in any other place. To meet my expenses thus far, I had been compelled to dispose of my piano-forte and some other objects of value.

I returned then to Naples, and took a room in the convent of San Niccola da Tolentino dei padre delle Missione, situated in the quartiere di San Carlo all' Arena. One father Spaccapietra lived there also, not less worthy of veneration for his virtue than for his learning, and very potent in Rome, also, which was the head-quarters of his missions. I related my troubles to him, in extenso, and asked his advice and aid. He was a good deal interested in my case. He rubbed his forehead in silence, in the manner of a man who is accustomed to think before he speaks; then, turning to my mother, he said: —

"I think that the story of the arrest was only an equivoque of General Torchiarlo. It is a measure which may be resorted to sometimes, when rigorous measures are necessary; but only when the religiosa has given occasion for public scandal, and certainly if she carry the fruit of it in her womb. Will you do me the favor to name to me your residence? I shall see His Eminence to-day, and I will let you know what is the result of the consultation."

Reassured by the counsels of this excellent missionary, I returned to the house somewhat comforted with the hope, that Providence had not entirely abandoned me.

A few days passed, and the venerable missionary came to inform me that he had had a long conversation with the cardinal about my case, who had formally denied having consulted with the king about me, or ever having obtained an order for my arrest. And in saying this the cardinal *lied;* yes, absolutely lied, as I afterwards ascertained to my entire satisfaction.

Spaccapietra said that he was unable to obtain for me the proceeds of my dower to San Gregorio; but that Riario had consented to allow me the five months' back income, and promised to leave me in peace hereafter.

After this, I had some months of respite. My mother, happy to see me liberated from the dominion of the priests, avoided, during the carnival, giving any festivities in her house, as was her custom every year. By this precaution I was much gratified, resolved as I was to avoid all cause for new molestation, and to lead a retired life, divided between domestic cares and study. And as the study of the history of my own country seemed to me not to belong exclusively to the men, but as well to Italian women of our day, I found means to procure the best authors in this branch of national education, and read carefully the works of Macchiavelli, Guicciardini, Botta, Santarosa, Colletta, and some histories of the war for independence in America, and of the regeneration of Greece.

In the month of June one of my sisters, living in Gaeta, wrote that her husband was seriously ill, and

my mother went to her immediately. I did not accompany her. After my mother's departure I went with my conversa to live in the house of another married sister in Naples.

She lived in the Vico Canale, sopra Toledo, upon the sixth floor of a house, being at that time in straitened circumstances, on account of her husband having been compromised in the movement of 1848, and suspended from the exercise of his profession, which was that of an advocate. They were also under the surveillance of the police.

The scarcity of my own means, and the penury of my brother-in-law, did not permit me to use a carriage every time that an urgent necessity called me out of the house. Among these urgent necessities was that of delivering secret notices to the members of a patriotic society, then not less efficient than beneficial, — but to-day, under our present government, superfluous, if not pernicious, — a service which a person of the other sex could not lend without incurring the suspicions of some of the innumerable spies who, at the time, swarmed in the streets, in the houses, and even in the churches of Naples.

Now, if I was not able to go out in a carriage, how could I expect to go around on foot in the Benedettine dress, in a city where the idlers and boys amuse themselves with making fun of, and impeding the free

passage of the streets to, women who are unaccompanied by gentlemen?

I left off, therefore, the nun's habit, and put on a plain black silk, similar to the one recommended by Cardinal Capano, and which others, as well, counselled me to wear.

Father Spaccapietra left meanwhile for Japan, on a mission. Before going he presented me, as a token of remembrance, a copy of the "Imitation of Christ." I had, besides, the memory of his exemplary character, which I esteemed highly.

The evening of June 13, I returned to my room, where, seated with Maria Giuseppa, we talked over our past trials in the various cloisters where we had been, and mutually consoled, congratulated, and cheered each other with the thought that we were finally permitted to breathe the free air of heaven. All around us, in fact, inspired calm, well-being, expansion. Over everything happiness seemed to reign. The air was tepid, and impregnated with perfume, which was thrown off by the flowers that stood in their vases upon the terrace below; and we heard at the different windows in the vicinity the clear, merry laugh of some young girls, just entering upon the world's stage, who had not the fear of the convent before their eyes. The moon, high in the heavens, pursued its lonely and superb course, in all its splendor, attended by a retinue of small clouds, silvered and fringed with unparalleled

beauty; and it seemed to me that I had at last arrived at the position which Providence had from the beginning assigned to me, where I was able, freely, to offer my feeble co-operation in the service of my fellow-creatures.

But fortune, which so often plays with human felicity as with a foot-ball, was preparing to make me pay dearly for this momentary gleam of happiness. Maria Giuseppa, the most constant and faithful participant of my misfortunes, seemed to enjoy unbounded happiness in assuring me that she would never abandon me while she lived. Who could have believed that that evening was the last in which we should ever be together!

The following day we were all at dinner, when the door-bell rang. My sister's servant went to the window, which looks out upon the stairway, and, seeming to be greatly surprised, told us that a priest was looking for me.

"Let him come in!" I answered, thinking it probable that it might be the ex-vicar of Capua, who was at this time in Naples.

But my heart, which, habituated to disasters, always presaged misfortune, began now to palpitate furiously.

I heard the steps, not of one, but of several persons. I went to the door of the saloon to listen, and overheard an altercation between my brother-in-law and the new-comers. Going outside I saw a man of colossal

proportions, with an enormous head, and a face like a full moon, a species of Briareus, who was sitting on the divan, as though he was master of the house. Beside him sat a priest, pale, thin, and of sinister aspect, while my brother-in-law was standing with his hands resting on a chair, the picture of consternation.

Although unknown to me, these two horrible-looking creatures frightened me. The giant opened his throat, and with a voice not dissimilar to the roar of a marine conch-shell, asked: —

"Is this the religiosa, Enrichetta Caracciolo Forino?"

"Yes," I replied. "With whom have I the honor to speak?"

"With the Commissario, Morbili."

My God, what a name! I started, as if from a violent shock of electricity, — he was the dread of Naples! The Duke Morbili, faithful bully of the king, and satellite of Del Caretto, had risen to favor solely on account of his great services, which had spread a terror at the mention of his name, and the inordinate assiduity with which he labored in his vocation. Who was there in Naples at that time who would not rather have seen, I will not say the devil, but certainly a fire, small-pox, or any other murderous disaster enter his home rather than *il Morbili?*

"And this," he went on to say, pointing to his companion, "this is a priest of the curia."

I readily understood now what awaited me.

"What is wanted of me?" I demanded.

"You are arrested!"

"Arrested! Is it possible! For what?"

"It is quite possible, and you must go with me."

"Where?"

"To a convent."

"To which convent?"

"To the Ritiro di Mondragone."

"Can I know by the sentence of what tribunal, or at least by whose orders?"

"That does not concern you."

There are critical moments in which God inspires the weak with courage, in order that they shall not be entirely crushed by the power of the strong.

"It concerns me more than it does you," I said, proudly. "Nevertheless, I will follow you. I go now to dress myself."

Initiated into all the secrets of the profession of the ruffian, Morbili determined to search my room, to discover if it offered any mode of escape for me; but seeing that there was but the one door, he was pleased to allow me to dress myself free from his surveillance. I was followed to my room by Maria Giuseppa, who, from her extreme fright, was deprived of both reason and speech, and threw the greatest possible confusion, not only into her own, but into my preparations as well. In half an hour, however, we were both ready.

"Do not look so cast down," I said to my conversa, "recompose yourself before going out. It will gratify these people too much to see you thus sad."

"You say well, signora," she replied, and to please me she forced herself to smile, while it was only with the utmost difficulty that she restrained her tears.

"You can go ahead," said the commissario to the priest, "the signora makes no resistance."

The vampyre made an obeisance and disappeared.

Morbili turned to Maria Giuseppa, who, with her arms covered with shawls and other articles, stood ready to follow me, and asked: —

"And who are you?"

"I am the conversa."

"You are not to accompany the signora to the convent!" added the Cyclops.

"Why?" we both demanded, at one breath.

"The signora will be taken to the ritiro; you will go with me to the commissariato to be interrogated, and will then be sent to your own home in the country."

The screams and lamentations which the poor girl uttered, as she entwined herself about my person, as if for protection and refuge, and then her cries and groans, and the subsequent desperation to which she gave herself up, took away my self-command. My excitement, which from self-respect I strove to repress, caused spasms in the muscles of my mouth, so that if I had desired to speak, I should have been utterly unable.

Poor Maria Giuseppa, seizing now my hand, now my dress, cried: —

"O my dear adored signora, if you do not wish to get rid of your poor conversa, why do you not drive these villains out of the house?"

The commissario now called an inspector, who was standing at the door, and consigned the poor girl to him. I said nothing for fear of making a scene, but gave to Giuseppa a last kiss, and besought our old family servant to go with her, and not to leave her until she should be sent to her relatives. Then turning to the commissario, I said: —

"I hope, knowing the respectability of my family, you are not going to make me follow you on foot through the streets!"

"Nor prevent myself and her sister from accompanying her," said my brother-in-law.

Morbili ordered a carriage, and permitted my relatives to accompany me. Meanwhile Maria Giuseppa came up to take final leave of me, and covered my hand with kisses. The desolation of this unhappy creature was so distressing, that even Morbili might have pitied her.

"Courage," I said to her, finally, and, releasing myself from her grasp, I went first out of the door.

The stairs were crowded with the police; there were as many as if they had been about to surprise and capture a band of brigands, and more than a hundred per-

sons had assembled outside the street door to enjoy the spectacle!

The church and the edifice di Santa Maria delle Grazie di Mondragone, situated on the San Carlo alle Mortelle, form the asylum which Elena Aldobrandini, Duchess of Mondragone, established in 1653, in which the Neapolitan women, reduced to poverty and remaining widows, might lead a tranquil and monastic life. To-day there are occasionally some educande admitted, but in reality the establishment is now destined for, and used as, a penitentiary or prison.

We arrived there a little before three o'clock P.M., ascended the steps which lead from the street door, and at the ingress of the second we found two priests posted, and with them the superiora, who was called here the *priora*. One of these priests was that spectre of Banquo who had come with Morbili to make the arrest; the other was the ecclesiastical superiore of the place, the same who, on account of his furious reactionary deeds, left in 1848 the saddest remembrances of his name, and who, as *regio revisore*, expunged from all Italian manuscripts the word *eziandio* (even or also), because, perhaps, he recognized in its termination, *dio*, the name of the Supreme Being! For his great devotion to the Bourbonic dynasty, and for the renown of his *oscurantismo*, he was decorated with the order of Francesco I., and always styled himself "cavaliero."

From the number of bows he made to the commissario, and from the words which passed between them, I gathered that they were old friends, — hounds in the same leash!

My brother-in-law, who had with difficulty restrained his wrath up to this point, broke out now in bitter remonstrances against the cardinal's course.

"If you are not silent, instantly," said the ecclesiastical superiore to him, "I will drive your words down your throat by a couple of blows!"

I seized my brother-in-law by the arm, and, shaking him forcibly, said: —

"Why do you excite yourself, whilst I, who am the victim, am silent? Now that you have seen me safely here, pray take my sister and go away."

Silence was at length restored. The commissario took from the priest of the curia a receipt for my person and went off, and I hurried my sister away, in order that her husband should have no further opportunity to compromise himself.

"Write soon to Gaeta," I said, while embracing her; "write all to mother, and, for mercy's sake, take of Maria Giuseppa the same care you would take of me."

I remained alone with the policeman and two jailers at my side. They took me up to the third floor, then led me to a large and dismal room, which had the appearance of a prison for the condemned. Two small holes only served to admit light, which was faint and gloomy

on account of the height of the palazzo Villannova, which was opposite. The walls were bare and filthy, the roof supported by beams which were uncovered, the floor of broken bricks, and for furniture two paralytic chairs and nothing else.

The prioress and prior of the literary inquisition went outside the door to consult in a low voice, and I was left alone with the priest of the curia.

Who would believe in the gallantry of a vampyre?

Seeing me alone, abandoned, disconsolate, and deprived of every defence, this priest, who was not old, thought to profit by the opportunity of offering me the great advantage of his protection; and, assuming a love-making attitude, which only seemed to make his face more repulsive still, and extending his hands to me, said:—

"If you need anything here, tell the priora freely, from whom you will always receive sympathy, as you will, also, even from your devoted servant."

A most profound bow and smile accompanied this last phrase, which only served to expose a set of horrible teeth!

"Execrable monster!" I cried, fiercely excited, and, pointing the way to the door, "away with you, and tell him who sent you here, that I hope, with Heaven's aid, to see very soon both him and you, and all who are like you, sent to perdition!"

It brought no blush to his cheeks; but taking up his

hat he gained the door very stealthily, and I shut it upon him.

Then, returning to the middle of the room, I threw myself upon my knees, clasped my hands, and raising my eyes to heaven and my heart to God, prayed for his aid in this, the most desperate strait of my life.

I felt that my prayer was heard, and that my heavenly Father listened favorably to the appeals of the contrite and humble heart.

CHAPTER XXII.

IL RITIRO DI MONDRAGONE.

A horrible incarceration — Visit of the priora — Writing materials denied me — Prohibited talking to, or seeing any one, whatever, or even to look out of a window — My distress — Am I really sane? — Four days absolutely without food — Doctor Sabini — Examination of my trunks by the priest in charge — The doctor brings me good news, which proves a better restorative than his medicines, and I take food again — The good doctor had deceived me; his good news was an invention of his own — Write to my mother, enclosing my letter in my dirty clothes, which I send to her to be washed, and receive answers in the same way — Letter to my mother — Determination of the superiors to provide me with a confessor — I finally select one, who is objected to by the authorities, but is finally conceded to me — My mother sees the pope's nuncio, who, on hearing of my case, comes to see me — Conflict with the superiore, who, suspecting the means I had employed, himself examines carefully all my dirty clothes, and finds secreted in a towel a letter to my mother, which I had placed there on purpose to deceive him — Permission finally from the cardinal, at the intercession of the nuncio, is given me to send and receive letters under seal — One further application to the pope — Another denial — Contemplate flight — Dissuaded from it by my confessor, who advises another petition to the pope, which is arranged for — The medical certificate.

HAVING been for about a year and a half released from my former isolation, and reinvigorated by the association and uninterrupted intercourse with my relatives and friends, the effects of the silence which now surrounded me proved incomparably more cruel. Not a single human voice was to be heard; no trace of a living thought; no longer even the agreeable sounds of human industry reached the ear; nothing, in this new desert, but the monotonous buzzing of the flies, to con-

trast with the hurricane which had just spent its force upon me. One thought alone now occupied my mind.

Which authority had decreed my arrest, the ecclesiastical or the civil? Was I again the victim of Riario and of his *camorra;* or was it rather some imputation of a political nature, the result of espionage, which had thrown me into the hands of the officers of the government?

Probably the first, possibly the second; but more probable still, a concurrence of the two. Whatever the cause, however, my condition was sad enough now, and to the last degree horrible.

I was unfortunately a woman. Too much given to suspicion and to slander, how would the world look upon my sudden confinement in a ritiro, whose equivocal reputation could easily furnish a pretext for calumny? Situated aloof from all contact with human society, by what efficacious means should I be able to confute the lies which the priests would not fail to spread, to the detriment of my reputation and in their own exculpation?

Against this last and most barbarous blow of destiny, I knew not how to oppose that moral energy, with which I had till now resisted the blows which misfortune had dealt me. To be a man (were it only for a few days), — to find myself in London, Paris, or in America, in a free country, owner of nothing but a few sheets of paper, — I would have renounced, I will not say existence, of

which only the Creator can dispose, but surely of a throne, if I had had one at my disposal.

An hour later I heard a light knock at my door. I did not answer. It was renewed, and I remained silent. At the third knock I heard the voice of the priora, who prayed me to open the door to her.

"Am I the mistress of this hole?" I inquired.

"Yes, signora, you are mistress; but you must open the door."

"Break down the door, if you please, then; I shall not open it."

The priora supplicated me, in the most humble manner, justifying the disturbance she was making me, by the necessity of doing something for me. I then opened the door to her, and saw that she was terrified at the attitude I had assumed. Two converse brought a bed, a small table, and a lamp.

"Have the goodness," said I, "to procure me the materials for writing."

She screwed up her features, as one does who has something very disagreeable to say. Then mumbling over her words, she replied: —

"I am sorry that I have to tell you, that reading and writing are prohibited to you, by the superiors, until further orders."

"Can I not, then, correspond in writing, even with my relatives?"

"This you can do, provided I read your letters before they are sealed, and take notice of the contents of the answers before they are consigned to you."

"Am I prohibited all books, without exception?"

"We have, here, several devotional books; these you can read as much as you please."

The circle of my life was all the time contracting. I demanded to know what were the precise orders which had been given in my case.

"Rigorous orders," she answered. "You are prohibited from seeing or speaking to any one whatever; you cannot receive here, either relatives, friends, or acquaintances, much less, any stranger, who might come by accident to seek you; and, in order to avoid all possible opportunity for clandestine intelligence, you are absolutely prohibited from approaching the windows, from going out upon the terrace, or into the parlatorio; and the apex of severity —"

"We shall know when you finish," I interrupted her, to say.

"You are not permitted to have any one in your service."

"Thanks!" I said to her; "how do you call this place?"

"Il Ritiro di Mondragone."

"It might better be called the prison of the Santo Uffizio. You can tell me, perhaps, if I am to be kept here a long time?"

"Who can tell? You may have to remain here two, three, five, or even ten years, at the pleasure of the superiors. In order the sooner to accustom yourself to patience, you had better at once abandon all hope of ever getting out."

"Do not hide the truth from me, I pray you. Am I, perhaps, condemned for life?"

"Recommend yourself to God, and think only of your soul!"

"It is enough!" I cried.

And with this, I fell prostrate and senseless on the floor.

When I opened my eyes again, I found myself stretched out upon the bed, and alone. I observed then, with concern, an unsteadiness in my mind, a disturbance in my reasoning faculties, the cause of which I was totally unable to divine. That I was being deprived of my senses was a fact of which I was clearly conscious; but this aberration, whence did it proceed? Was it the effect of a swoon? Was it excessive grief? Or was it the effect of a contusion on my head, when I fell upon the brick floor? The greater efforts I made to seize the helm of reason, which was escaping from my hand, the more distinctly I perceived that I was not mistress of it, as before. My discernment was weak, my memory confused, and all the faculties of the mind, in fact, in a chaotic state, and the central idea of that

chaos, — an idea which took complete possession of me, a troublesome picture, and a tormenting anxiety, — was, that the man who had loved me so passionately, Domenico, had become a priest, and that, dressed in his sacerdotal robes, he seemed to be standing by my side, and engaged in reading to me the sentence of my death.

Then began from this moment, and continued for some time, not easy to determine how long precisely, a period of my existence oscillating at intervals between sanity and a complete confusion of the mental faculties. I will spare the reader the annoyance which the account of my delirium might occasion him; but in continuing the thread of the narrative, with equal exactness, and with the sole duty of not leaving any gap in this place, I may be permitted to place here a prayer, and this is, that I may not be aggrieved with the responsibility of some acts committed during the intervals of this delirium, — acts which I shall relate, because they are true, but whose reprehensible nature I am the first to acknowledge and deplore.

. . . . . .

At twilight a conversa entered with a lamp, and behind her came the priora, provided with smelling-salts and small bottles of perfumes for me to smell. I told her I had imagined, and desired to put into execution, a plan which would frustrate the publicity of my sufferings. The serious and sombre tone in which I expressed my design made her laugh. She was a woman

under forty, fresh and vigorous yet, and affable rather than otherwise. My condition moved her to pity, and she offered many words of compassion; but, not less careful of her charge, she aspired as well to the approbation of the superiors, by pedantically executing their orders. Such an ungrateful duty I, in her case, would never have accepted.

A little later they brought me a dish of broth; but I refused it. The night which succeeded was the most anxious of my life. I arose frequently to renew my prayers to God to preserve my sanity. In the morning they brought me coffee. I sent it back untouched, as I did also the dinner which was sent to me.

Two hours later, my baggage arrived. The priora gave me a letter from my sister, which she had already opened. How was I gratified to learn that Maria Giuseppa, after the examination at the police office, had been consigned to her uncle in the country! My sister added, that she had already written to my mother, who, on being informed of what had happened to me, said that she should not fail to demand an audience of the king. I felt utterly unable, mentally and physically, to write; nevertheless, in a few lines, I informed her that for fear that I should address to the pope, or to the other authorities, some demand for release, all my letters were to be opened and read. It was necessary to be careful, therefore, what was written by either of us.

The day following, the repulsive figure of the eccle-

siastical superiore appeared at the door. At the sight of him I felt my blood boil, and incapable of restraining my wrath, I broke out in imprecations both against the cardinal and the king. A strange welcome to the public censor! Don Pietro Calendrelli (such was his name) thought that he could impose silence on me, as he found himself able to do every day on the authors of grammars and dictionaries. He well knows whether he succeeded or not!

"I take as an insult," said I, "the visits of priests, censors, and inquisitors. Liberate me, then, from your presence, if you do not wish me to return insult for insult."

"This unjust anger," he replied, "does not permit you to see that you outrage your benefactors. When you shall have calmed down from this state of irritation, His Eminence will visit you."

I stepped back a little, and, pointing with my finger, said: —

"Tell him not to dare to do it, for I have become a tiger."

The priest turned to the priora, and exclaimed: —

"She's certainly crazy. Let us go away."

This exclamation of the priest startled me. "Am I, then, really crazy?" I asked myself.

Meanwhile, four days had passed since I had taken any nourishment whatever. A long and languishing malady would not have produced a greater change in

my looks. My complexion had become like bronze, and the whites of my eyes were of the color of saffron. If I went to bed to escape from this horrid phantom, which persecuted me, I only had again before me the picture of the priest, Domenico, who was always in the act of sending me to the gibbet. In short, deprived of every glimmer of hope, infirm of body and mind, I every moment invoked either immediate death or restoration to liberty.

At the sixth day, I had not sufficient strength left to rise from the bed; still I would not take the remedies which the priora recommended.

On the following day, the physician was sent for. He was a certain Doctor Sabini, a good man, and as I afterwards discovered, one who nourished a generous love for his country. He listened to the priora's account of my illness, and that included, of course, my refusal to take any nourishment whatever.

"So much the better," he observed; "fasting is rather beneficial, than otherwise, to her health. As soon as the fever passes, we will force her to take food."

He called for the inkstand, to write a prescription; but I held him by the hand to prevent him.

"You will only waste your time," I said. "I am firmly resolved to take no remedies whatever. You are, however, welcome, if you come as a friend; but if you only come to aid me professionally, you will oblige me by leaving me instantly."

I had not concluded, when the head of the ecclesiastical superiore appeared at the door.

"Signor Sabini," he said, without passing the threshold, "the cardinal wishes to know from you the condition of the patient."

The sound of his disagreeable voice threw me into a fury, and I cried, as loud as I could: —

"Get away from here, *papasso mascherato!*"

"Calm yourself, for pity's sake!" said the physician to me. "Signor Cavaliero," he added, turning to the priest, "the patient is suffering from a nervous bilious fever, complicated with some symptoms of cerebral congestion. If she will take my prescriptions, and, above all, if she will renounce all thought of taking her own life by starvation, I think we shall get the better of the disease."

After these words, the priest entered the room and began to examine it carefully in every point.

"How is this!" he exclaimed; "how is this! Does she design to take her life! Signora Superiora," he added, in a hoarse and imperious tone; "take away from this room, at once, everything which she might possibly use to destroy herself."

The regal censor discovered my trunks and looked at the books they contained, which were, in his opinion, more dangerous than arsenic, — dangerous to something far more important than my life!

In order to avoid a conflict, which I knew must take

place if I remained in the room, I went to another whilst the priora and the priest, assisted by other persons, examined my trunks. They began with the room, which was examined in every hole, large and small; they took possession of my keys in the hope of finding something relative to secret societies; opened trunks; felt in the pockets of sacks; opened caskets, and pushed the examination even to my linen! The only objects which attracted their attention were several volumes of foreign publications, among which, I remember Ozanam on Dante, and a work on Education, by Tomassèo; the sacred hymns of Manzoni, and a poem on Liberty, by Dionysius Salomos, an eminent poet of modern Greece. They disguised the hatefulness of making this capture by the sequestration of knives, forks, scissors, penknife, and other similar things!

The enemy of the word *eziandio* was just ready to go downstairs, when I re-entered my own room. Turning to me, with a simper, into which all his innate bitterness was thrown, he said: —

"With your good permission, I will report to His Eminence, your and my benefactor, that I have taken away every means by which you might be able to destroy yourself;" and saying this, he went downstairs.

A very dangerous bundle of papers, however, had escaped their notice during their examination. I was sure, however, that the hand of man, unless he was an

expert, would not discover the hiding-place in which they were secreted. But of this another time.

Doctor Sabini came every morning, early, to see me. The natural strength of my constitution enabled me to triumph in this desperate moral and physical struggle, in which most women would have been obliged to succumb. Nevertheless I persisted in abstaining from food, and the physician perceived that, from this cause alone, my strength was failing from day to day, rapidly.

The morning of the eleventh day found me in a state of great depression. I could not lift my fleshless arm, and, in attempting to raise my head from the pillow, I fainted. So far had this emaciation gone, that I was no longer able to get out of my bed, and could not, as I had been accustomed, lock the door of the entrance to this den.

The physician, in order to save me, conceived a compassionate expedient.

The governor of this ritiro was a Caracciolo, Prince of Cellamare; he was also a physician. More than once he told me that he had had a conversation with the governor about me. One morning, laughing and rubbing his hands, he said: —

"Cheer up, signorina, I bring you good news! Yesterday evening the prince recommended your case very warmly to the authorities, who have condescended that you may leave this place as soon as you are convalescent."

My heart began to beat so furiously that I do not know why I did not faint.

"Shall I then be released?" I inquired, almost gasping for breath, and extending my hand.

"Certainly," he replied; "but it is necessary for you first to regain your strength, for I do not wish you to go out from here looking wildly enough to frighten the people. Quick, signora priora, bring her some broth!"

A moment after, the conversa brought me a little, of which the doctor made me take several spoonfuls, supporting me himself with his arm with true paternal kindness. At the third spoonful my sight was obscured, and, before I could get down upon the pillow again, I threw up the soup, thin as it was.

"We will leave her now in peace," said the doctor, "she is too much debilitated. I will now write a prescription for a *calmante*, which must be administered every half hour."

I was left then to myself to take my soup as I might feel able to do it; but far more than the broth, or the prescription, did the words of the doctor reanimate me. The following day I was better. I continued to be afflicted with apparitions, the effect of mental disorder; but hope, the supreme specific, what comfort will it not bring to a heart rendered desperate by its troubles! After four days the melioration of my condition was great; in the sixth, the doctor inquired for me only at the parlatorio, but did not come up to my room. At

the end of the week I began by degrees to take more substantial food; but, meanwhile, the doctor did not show himself any more in my room. I made some complaints of his neglect to the priora, and he was called again.

He came finally. After he had inquired about my health, I demanded to know the day in which I should be permitted to go out. He answered me evasively; did not destroy all my hope, but said he could not tell me the precise time when. . . . Alas! I now began to realize the bitter certainty that I had been compassionately deceived.

I cried then as no woman ever cried before, and gave myself up anew to the most uncontrollable desperation. I did not know what extreme means to adopt; but I had not the courage to attempt to cut short my days again by starvation.

In the mean while my mother returned from Gaeta. On being informed by my sister that my letters were subjected to an inquisition in the parlatorio, similar to that to which all the public correspondence through the different post-offices in the kingdom was submitted, she gave me an account of her operations in terms unintelligible to others. She had failed to accomplish anything; but well knowing her haughty and resolute character, could I believe, after such an effort, that she would stand with folded hands?

In one of my lucid intervals (which were now occurring more frequently), I conceived an ingenious subterfuge. I asked the priora how my washing was to be done, and was answered that her converse had no time to do it. I therefore made up a bundle of clothes to send to my mother's house to be washed, and in the corner of a pocket-handkerchief I placed a note, in which I asked her for a more particular account of what she had attempted for me.

The clothes were returned to me after a few days and I found the answer enclosed in the same manner.

My mother wrote that she had spoken with the king and even with the queen; that they had both told her that she should go to the archbishop, rather than apply to them; that it was not their custom to mix themselves up with the affairs of the church. They said, besides, that playing the organ and singing the vespers was a more appropriate occupation for a nun, than to be conspiring in the open air with the enemies of the throne and the altar!

No doubt now remained; not one power alone, but two, had laid their hands upon me,—the police and the archbishop. To tell the truth, the suspicions of the Bourbonic police were well founded. Naturally possessed of strong passions, a mobile imagination, and a will strong enough to struggle against the seductions of sentiment, as well as against the current of habit, I had looked for the reintegration of liberty in my native land,

even before I had thoroughly instructed myself in the subject, by the study of Roman history and the annals of our own republics. Books, journals, and the society of men of vigorous thought, and, above all, the example of other nations further advanced in the career of civilization than ours, caused the sacred fire of love of country to burn in my bosom. From this time forth, I execrated the imperial eagle and the princes who were its satellites, the depravation of the priesthood, and the cringing court intrigues of our nobles, with that inexorable hate with which the Saracens were detested by the Spaniards, and the Turks by the Greeks, the Russians by the Poles, and the Barbary pirates by all the Christian nations of the world!

Ambitious as I was to contribute my feeble aid to so noble a mission, I did not cease to seek, under the shadow of a nun's cowl, that hidden centre of operations where my industry might be put to exercise. I knocked a long time before I obtained an answer; but the door was finally opened to me. There were moments of exultation to me, and of enthusiasm, in which I had the arrogance to believe that if all the women should think and feel as I did, no barbarian host would ever be able again to fall upon Italy, or, at least, her soil would no longer bear the marks of the devastating tracks of tyrants!

The suspicions of the police, therefore, were not without a foundation; but who could have put them upon my tracks? I do not know, nor is it important

now to know. However it may be, I now lost all hope of ever seeing the light of day again.

To this source of discomfort, another still more irritating was added. Having refused to obey the orders of the curia, repeatedly sent to me, to reassume the monastical habit, I now received peremptory orders to put it on within three days, under the alternative of seeing myself confined in another ritiro in the provinces, and of passing the remainder of my life in entire separation from my relatives and from the world!

I was compelled, therefore, again to put on this hateful badge of inertia, of ignorance, of egotism, raised to the dignity of doctrine! To fall, forever, and without hope, under the rod of an ignorant and fanatical abbess! To be buried in the corruption of a cloister, where the voice of one's own heart, or reason, can never enter! From this horrible idea my poor mind, already disordered, received its last shock.

I have already said, that in a convenient hiding-place in my trunk, something had escaped the inquisitions of the priests. This parcel contained a bundle of revolutionary papers, in cipher, a dagger, and a pistol, — things belonging to my brother-in-law, and by him given to me in deposit at the time I was in the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli.

It was the night of July 16, an hour before midnight. After having knelt at the foot of my bed and offered the prayer for the dying to the God of mercy, I wrote

the following letter to my mother, — a letter palpitating with affection and bathed in tears.

I said to her: —

. . . . . .

"To the enormity of my punishment, no one will lend his faith who has not suffered in a similar manner. To exist, and to believe one's self to be dreaming, this perpetual straining to surmount the breaker which surges against you and waits to swallow you, with no hope whatever of ever gaining the shore; this being buried alive and awaking in the darkness of the coffin! — ah, mother, believe me, these are insupportable afflictions.

"Dear mother, this life which you gave me has been none other than one of torture. Of what value is existence, if it is blind to liberty and to conscience, — if it is condemned to atrophy, whilst God's other creatures breathe their native element, free and healthy as the birds of the air? Be, therefore, the first to pardon me, and defend my memory, when the only trace which will be left of me to the world will be your commiseration!"

I finished the letter, and, drawing the dagger from its hiding-place, I plunged it into my side . . . .

Do not condemn me, reader, — rather pity me. Retracing mentally all my sufferings, place yourself in my miserable state, and weep with me, who, while writing of these horrible moments, find myself profoundly excited. Ah, yes! I had suffered, and suffered until the

lamp of reason was fully spent! Pardon me, as I hope to receive the pardon of God!

My pulse, weak and trembling, gave slight force to the blow. A whalebone in my dress had obstructed the passage of the steel, which, sliding off, inflicted only a slight flesh-wound.

I should, perhaps, have renewed the blow, but the horror and the chill, which the cold blade of the dagger gave me, aroused me from the delirium. The instinct of self-preservation, is it not a part of the divine law? That internal monitor, which cries out to the desperate, "Save thyself!" is it not the voice of the protecting angel who is sent from heaven?

The steel fell from my hands, and I seated myself, trembling, upon a chair. It was not written that I should die by my own hands in a fit of madness! I lived, I cried, I suffered still, and, praise be to divine Providence, I outlived this period of ignominy and servitude! But new torments awaited me!

The priests, not content with forcing me to reassume the cowl, determined that I should have for a confessor a religioso of their faith, Father Quaranta, an Agostiniano. Regarding my soul as one already consigned to perdition, whose conversion would not fail to be ascribed to a miracle, they had selected this religioso as one who, already celebrated for his wonderful eloquence, and in the odor of sanctity, would be easily able to vanquish any resistance on my part. I resolved, however, not to

go to the confessional. Quaranto was, therefore, brought to my room every day, in spite of my protestations. He was a poor old piece of stupidity, going under full sail to imbecility, who, too much occupied with the paltriest inanities, recited everything on the same key and like a musical snuff-box, and forgot, from one moment to another, my objections.

The prattle of this childish old fool destroyed the beneficial effects of the last crisis in my reason. I protested anew against the daily annoyance; but I was answered that the daily catechism of the confession was necessary to the salvation of my soul; at the same time, if I preferred to change, they offered to provide me with another confessor, a certain Cutillo, who enjoyed a similar reputation in Naples to that of Quaranta.

"If you like him so much, take him for yourself," I replied to the priest superiore. "If I must confess, I prefer a person of my own selection, not of yours."

The priora had spoken to me of an old canonico of the neighborhood, who came often to say the mass in the church of the ritoro, and repeatedly inquired after my health, and of my moral state, and urged the priora to pay every attention to me in my misfortunes.

I knew him by reputation for a man learned, prudent, and of spotless probity. I asked the priora to call him to confess me. He sent a reply that he would accept the incumbency, provided that I did not intend to avail

myself of his mediation with the head of the Neapolitan church.

I gave him to understand that I was very far from humiliating myself after that fashion, and he came. But the selection of this worthy prelate was disapproved by His Eminence not less than by the ecclesiastical superiore of the establishment. And the reason was this, — the canonico was a Christian at heart and in conscience, and not from party spirit or from pride. He was a minister in the service of suffering humanity, and not the instrument of a ferocious caste. They, on the contrary, were far beneath him in moral character, in ability, and in doctrine. It followed, then, as a matter of course, that the sentiments of the subaltern, being diametrically opposed to that of the superiors, their attempts to reach the mind of the penitent by means of the confessor would be vain.

Notwithstanding, ashamed of themselves for having shown a disapproval of a confessor, which they could not justify, they were, a little later, constrained to revoke it, and in consequence, in the sincere comforts proffered to me by this good old man, I had the consoling proof that Heaven had not altogether withdrawn its clemency from me.

But I repeat it, misfortunes never come singly.

General Salluzzi, who on so many occasions had given me proofs of his paternal affection, was, after these last

events, so severely rebuked for the protection he had afforded to a poor nun, conspiring against the government and in rebellion to the church, that he dared no longer to call himself my friend. Besides this loss, which occasioned me no little mortification, the king suspended an annual assignment of sixty ducats in my favor, the last and only resource at that time left to me. From this time forth, notwithstanding the assistance received from my family, my sufferings for the want of means were many. Obliged to do everything for myself, although not accustomed to it, I confined myself, for one entire summer, to bread alone, with a little fruit, eating meat only on Sundays.

As to my sequestration, it was completed in the first six months. With the exception of the physician who visited me at first, I had not seen, from the time of my incarceration, any other human figure, except the disagreeable ones of the priests, monks, and nuns, and this constrained me to be contented to imprison myself in my own room, and to reduce myself to a state of complete isolation. One thread of communication with the outside world only was yet left to me, and that was the as yet unsuspected mail-bag, which continued its weekly journey back and forth, a precious and confiding messenger, which enabled me to keep up a regular correspondence with my mother.

By the aid of a few choice and well-selected books, what annoyances might not even here be forgotten?

what sadness dissipated! and how would not the darkness and silence of my cell be reanimated! Deprived of this harmless alleviation, I was obliged to recur to the books furnished by the ritiro. Nor do I regret having accepted them. I remember, especially, the *Vita delle Sante Martiri*, which I found there,—an interesting book which I have read and re-read many times with edification and great delight. The chaste poesy, the pure and holy zeal of that Christian era, served me as a calmante in the internal struggles which agitated me.

Admirable age of redemption, in which women of ardent faith, of hope, of sublime charity, not only disputed with man the privilege of heroism, but also the sacrifice of youth, of beauty, of property, and of life itself! With the practice of every virtue they were enabled to eclipse the modesty of hierarchs, the doctrines of the schools, and the lucubrations of theology. Who can deny that one of the most marvellous prodigies of Christianity might not be this new devotion of woman to the reform of society, to the renovation of the human race? And this faith, which draws her forth from the gymnasium, in order to sacrifice herself upon the funereal pile, is it not worthy of admiration beyond that of the heroism with which the names of Epaminondas and of Scipio are celebrated in the pages of Plutarch?

These, and no other examples, I should like to be able to keep before the eyes of our young women continually. What might not she dare do, what would she not accom-

plish, even the woman of to-day, if, taking this faith for her model, she should depose the flower of her affections on the altar of her country, as an offering of first-fruits? Instead of writing romances which enervate the heart, depress the spirits, and paralyze the aspirations, I would rather attempt to retemper the heart, if I could, to fruitful conceits and to robust sentiments. This would be my method to aid her to rise again from the inertia in which she now lies, and to prepare her to take her place among the workers in the great drama of civilization.

In my hours of idleness (and how many must I not have passed in more than three years of absolute sequestration), the little insects, my only living companions in the desert, afforded me most grateful diversion! How many hours did I not pass absorbed in listening to the isochronal sound of the nibbling of the wood-worm in the decaying woodwork of the door and the roof! How many times have I stretched my ears to hear the warbling of a little canary-bird in the vicinity, whose prison I was unable to discover, but whose patience and whose surprising joyousness I envied from the bottom of my heart! In the summer and autumn, a portion of my very small supply of bread was religiously reserved for the ants. Enticed by my hospitality, they crowded, in different republics and under different chiefs, into my room, took undisturbed possession of it, coming in and going out at their pleasure, or mounted the walls in numerous legions, or in divers tribes gathered around

me and struggled with each other for the possession of the few crumbs which I fed to them. Another time I amused myself as did Silvio Pellico, in contemplating the struggles of a poor fly which fell into the claws of a spider, reminding me of the maxim of Anacharsis: — "The justice of the king is a spider's web, in which the small insects become entangled and are captured; the large ones break through its meshes and take themselves off."

In the winter season, what aided me more than anything else to get through the long and sleepless nights, was the exercise of mnemotechny. By dint of mental practice at multiplication of determinate numbers, I became at last so skilful that I could easily find the product of two factors, each composed of five figures!

But let us resume the thread of our story.

Our clandestine correspondence had now been a long time regularly carried on, when one day I found in the usual place, a despatch to the following effect: —

"Try and obtain a meeting with the apostolic nuncio; he is a good man. You can write to him, and enclose your letter to me."

The meeting was demanded and very soon obtained. The nuncio came to Mondragone immediately on receiving my letter. At the announcement of a visit from so eminent a functionary from the Holy See, the ritiro was in uproar. The priora, arrogating to herself the honor

of the visit, ran in haste to the parlatorio. But what was her surprise to learn, that the minister of His Holiness came to see her prisoner! In the uncertainty whether she ought to permit me to come down to the parlatorio, or to adhere to her instructions to the letter, the poor woman was petrified, and knew not what answer to give to the nuncio. I, who was in expectation of this visit, hearing an unusual noise in the corridor, went out hurriedly from my room, and, as quickly as possible, descended the stairs, crowded by the nuns, who stood looking at me with amazement. I threw myself into the parlatorio, and in a haughty tone said to the priora: —

"Your duties call you elsewhere; leave me alone here, I pray you!"

In confusion she took her leave of the nuncio, calling him *Signor Dottore*, and turning her back, she said, in a low tone: —

"I wonder if she is crazy again!"

The nuncio was a man in the flower of his years and very prepossessing in his manners. He was greatly astonished at the account of my "Odyssey;" but not having any direct jurisdiction over the ritiro, he expressed his great regret that he was not able to offer me that aid which my condition demanded. But, notwithstanding this, he assured me, on leaving, that he would use every possible means in his power to obtain in my favor, if not an immediate release, at least some diminution of the rigors which were being visited upon me.

In ascending the stairs, I saw the priora and her nuns assembled in consultation, much dismayed. As I approached the crowd, I said to my jailer, smiling: —

"You need not give yourself any uneasiness about my future; you can send word to the cardinal that I have broken the arrest myself."

This air of decision was nothing new to the priora, or her nuns. I had for some time been in the habit of ridiculing them, and of angering them by every sort of malicious spite, remembering the words of that girl at Capua: "*I am saucy in order to secure a husband!*"

The priora told the priest-superior of the infraction of the orders on my part, and he came to my room speedily, snorting fire and flame. I received him without rising, and laughing. He, looking askance, said: —

"How have you dared to go down to the parlatorio, notwithstanding the peremptory orders of the cardinal?"

"*Ardire* (to dare) rhymes with *dormire* (to sleep)," I replied.

"*Malnaggia!* do you know, that, having once taken the vows, you must lend blind obedience to the superiors whom God has given you?"

"In which of the evangelists is it written that our Lord ever gave me for my superior the reverend cavalier Don Pietro Calendrelli?"

"I am your superior, in the name of the Holy Catholic church!"

"What do you mean by the Catholic church?"

"I mean, signora mia, the mistress of the king; the representative of God upon the earth; the Holy Father; and the entire Catholic world, which obeys her."

"With your good permission, I do not believe in the Holy See."

"Then you are not a Catholic!"

"If that which you call Catholicism, in the hands of the pope, of the cardinals, bishops, and priests, is only a trade, a machine for propagating ignorance and slavery, assuredly I would not be a Catholic."

"What then would you be?"

"A Christian, simply; by which I should gain largely."

"Oh, horrible! horrible!" he cried; "would you then be a Protestant?"

"A schismatic!" added the priora, who had entered the room.

"Neither the one nor the other," I replied. "I would be a Christian of that sect which most favors the civilization, well-being, and the liberty of the people. Behold my creed, which will also be the faith of future generations!"

"You are an impious and sacrilegious religiosa. Signora Priora, I recommend you to take good care that the contagion of such satanical opinions does not infect the innocent minds of the young girls of this ritoro!"

"Do not be uneasy," I replied; "some years hence

these girls will discover and detect your impostures, as I do."

Very far were they, however, from such a point. The ritiro was occupied almost exclusively by young girls, who, in consequence of the bigotry of the superiors, and the absence of good instruction, hardly knew how to write their own names; and how could it be otherwise while Calendrelli was the colleague of the renowned Monsignore Francesco Apuzzo? These girls, every time they passed my door, sighed, exclaiming: —

"Madonna della Grazia, save her soul! My God convert her!"

The superiore now set himself to work to discover by what means I had contrived to get a letter to the nuncio. One by one all the converse in the establishment were interrogated; but they knew nothing. He began finally to suspect that it must be by means of my basket of clothes going to be washed, and, not having any scruples about doing it, he ordered the priora to notify him when my clothes were next sent to be washed; and so, when this happened, the cavalier of the order of Francesco I., getting down on his knees over a bundle of a woman's dirty linen, had the impudence to undo the bundle with his own hands, and shake out every piece, without exception! But having anticipated this very thing I had set a trap for him. Folded

up in one corner of a towel the reverend found a letter directed to my mother. Getting upon his feet in a great glee, and with a hand trembling with impatience, he opened it.

"We have caught the mouse at last," said the priora; and without giving himself time to think he began to read it aloud. At the fourth line he turned pale. When he had only half finished the reading his voice died out between his teeth, and he concluded it entirely to himself.

In that letter I had said everything I could think of about him. I had called him impudent; a drunkard; a seducer; a clown; and I said, among other things, that every afternoon it was his custom to call, now one, and now another of the young educande to his own room, keeping them there with him a long time alone, under the pretence of assisting him to recite the evening prayers; and this was literally true. The letter terminated with the following epigram: —

"Vuol ragazze, *l'Eziandio*,
Non è prete, anch' ei, per Dio?
Prete, o frate, tanto basta,
Sono tutti d'una pasta."

I beg the reader's pardon for this escapade. I was desirous to cut it out; but in memoirs one is not com-

pelled, as in writing history, to suppress the comic side of the picture.

He tore the letter to pieces in a great fury; and the day following, the priora came to tell me that His Eminence had been pleased, through the intervention of the nuncio, to *allow me to participate in the effects of his inexhaustible compassion!* by kindly permitting me to descend to the parlatorio at will, and to send my letters to my mother in future, under seal, by means of our servant.

Meanwhile my worthy confessor did not fail to visit me two or three times a week. I confessed to him, or, to say better, argued with him a long time about the degree of respect the present was bound to concede to the authority of the past. He contended, among other things, that I should not only forget the offences of my enemies, but that I should love them, besides, with sincerity; and, as it was no longer in my power to leap the abyss which separated me from monasticism, he refused any longer to accord me either absolution or the communion.

I determined about this time upon making one more attempt at Rome; and this friend, who did all he could to humanize me, charged himself with the duty of transmitting my petition. Obtaining this promise, I prepared a new petition, in which I demanded, in direct terms of the pope, one of two things: either seculariza-

tion, or the permission to come to Rome myself to lay my reasons before him in my own proper person.

I received no answer until after many months of expectation. And what an answer! The Holy Father neither granted me the permission to come to Rome nor secularization. Nevertheless, he condescended that for the future I might be dispensed from the clausura.

This concession, at least, gave me the hope of being able to go out again, as I used to, from the Conservatorio di Costantinopoli. I sent to the cardinal to demand on what day I might be permitted to go out for the morning from the ritiro.

"I cannot permit it," he replied. "A ritiro for others; but the clausura for her!"

At this answer I knew not how to contain myself. Two years and a half had gone by since the time of my ingress into that wilderness.

Then the idea of flight came into my head; and I debated whether I should look to England or America for refuge. In either the one or the other of these free countries I should find brothers and companions in exile; but my inclinations were rather in favor of that one in which repose the mortal remains of Foscolo.

The portress was accustomed to go downstairs early in the morning to open the outside door, and, in returning, she closed the door above, so that the stairs were deserted at that time. Half way down were the doors of the parlatorio. It was my plan to descend

behind the portress without showing myself, and whilst she would be opening the door I would hide myself in the parlatorio, having taken care before daylight to lay on the rack, which stands inside, a hat, with a thick veil, and shawl. When the portress had gone back, and I had got outside myself, I intended to throw off the nun's dress, which I should have put on over a secular dress, and thus, with the hat and the shawl, I should have completed my disguise. A lady of my acquaintance would be expecting me in a neighboring street, and from the Piazzo del Vasto a carriage would have taken me to the Molo, and then I would forthwith embark on an English ship, which would be found in the harbor. My project, easy to execute, was known only to the above-mentioned woman, who, after accompanying me on board the vessel, would have carried a letter to my mother.

Judging my honest confessor to be incapable of betraying a secret, I thought best to impart to him my resolution to the end, that after the flight he might be able to protect himself from the rage of the cardinal. He was not satisfied with my project, and objected to it, as very imprudent and unnecessarily hazardous.

"No," said he; "you, who are a woman, and still young, and a nun as well, ought not to expatriate yourself to countries far away, without any means of subsistence after y. u get there; without any guide or protection. Your enemies would rejoice over it. Re-

main, figlia mia, and listen to the counsels of an old man, who feels the greatest interest in you."

These reasons were not without their effect upon me, for they came from a sacerdote who was highly respected for his wisdom, as well as his rare probity.

"But, father," I replied, "do you reflect that you are speaking to a moribund, who only lacks now the extreme unction? Did I say a moribund? I should say, rather, a corpse!"

"Any other means of escape you may attempt; this, no."

"And what other, then?"

"Why not despatch one of your relatives to Rome? Possibly such an agency might accomplish something."

Discouraged from my first design, I did not feel warranted in rejecting this new one, inasmuch as if this should fail, the escape by flight would be always open to me. But to whom among my relatives could I confide the duty of going to Rome on this mission? And then the expense? For that I trusted in Providence to provide.

By dint of much thought, I remembered a maternal aunt, educated in Bologna, who, endowed with singular assiduity, would, better than any one else, be able to undertake this charge. My aunt willingly accepted this incumbency, and my mother and my sisters contributed the necessary amount of money. I gave her the originals of all the mandates I had till now obtained,

together with a certificate of two physicians of the community of Mondragone, a certificate which, with the reader's permission, I will transcribe here entire, in order that my physical and moral condition, at that time, may be well understood.

"In June, 1851, the undersigned received an invitation, from the Royale Ritiro di Madragone, to visit the noble claustrale, Signora D. Enrichetta Caracciolo di Forino, who was suffering with a nervous affection. We observed her then attentively, and watched her case with every possible diligence, collecting all the necessary information as to how, and when, the convulsive symptoms commenced and succeeded. Continuing our visits to the above-named religiosa, we observed that the nervous perturbations had for their centre the cerebral region. In fact, there appeared in the head, at first, a severe pain; this was succeeded by a chill, which pervaded the entire organism, and produced a general tremor; then painful cramps followed, not only in the superior extremities, but even in the interior, and often over the whole body, which was sometimes contorted into a thousand different shapes, and the strength of two robust persons was often required to hold her during these spasms. One morning, while attending upon the patient, she was suddenly assailed by her chronic convulsions. They were so severe and so much prolonged that we entertained fears for her life.

Her pulse became faint, her heart ceased to beat, and over the surface of the body there was a deathly pallor, a general chill, and a cold perspiration, and, finally, deglutition was entirely impeded.

"The signora priora and the other religiose were often present on these occasions. The convulsions would last for three or four hours, then would slowly disappear to give place to delirium and violent contortions of the body, to such an extent that the sufferer might be said to be fairly seized with mental aberration; then would succeed a species of ecstasy, and sometimes the phenomenon of catalepsy. It was just at the termination of one of these attacks that the patient once attempted her own life, by endeavoring to plunge a dagger into her side, which, by good fortune, she did not have sufficient strength to accomplish.

"These sad attacks were repeated often, and always with the same symptoms here described; from which we were led to believe that other than physical causes, — that some moral causes, even, — had contributed to produce and keep up this morbid state. And we therefore demanded of the patient herself what were the reasons for her uncontrollable agitation, and she confessed to us that for a long time her mind had been violently disturbed, because she was compelled to be confined as a recluse in the cloister, which was abhorrent to her.

"We employed for this malady not only such reme-

dies as were already familiar to us, but resorted to the experience of other celebrated professors, and, in fact, whatever the science of the healing art could suggest, we have employed; but always to no purpose, — the patient was generally worse on account of the treatment.

"Now, in order that the above-mentioned religiosa should not fall into a still worse condition, — that is, into a state of absolute insanity, — we are of opinion, after consultation with our colleagues, that she ought to abandon the claustrale regime, — a regime which essentially influences and contributes to her diseased state.

"This, our declaration, conscientiously sworn to, the result of about twenty months' observation of her case, is only too brief, and does not pretend, minutely, to describe all the sufferings of the patient.

"Il medico consultante del luogo,

"Dott. Pietro Sabini.

"Il medico del luogo,

"Dott. Alessandro Parisi.

"*Napoli*, 23 *Gennaio*, 1853."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A BRIEF RESPITE.

My aunt departs on her mission to Rome — Alarming illness of my mother — The cardinal refuses to allow me to go to see her on her death-bed — Success of my attempts in Rome — I determine to leave the diocese of Naples for that of Castellamare — The cardinal comes to see me — Interview — Correspondence with the Bishop of Castellamare — The cardinal's last kick! — Leave the ritiro for Castellamare.

In the latter part of January my aunt went to Rome, and from her first letters I soon began to conceive new hopes. Things assumed a very favorable aspect. But who does not know the procrastinations of the Court of Rome, where in order to obtain a preliminary audience, it sometimes is necessary to wait weeks and even months!

In March following, my mother fell seriously ill of bronchitis. Every day the news which I received from her was that she was getting worse. I was very anxious to see her, and conceiving myself to be exonerated from the rigors of the clausura, I hoped that, at least on this grave and urgent occasion, I should not have any difficulty in obtaining the required permission. I made demand for such permission from the cardinal.

"No!" he replied with an imperial laconism.

The Princess di Ripa called upon him to implore him

to concede this act of humanity, which, not only a chief of a Christian church, but the most fanatical mufti of Constantinople should have hastened to grant. This kind lady told the cardinal that she would come for me in her own close carriage, and after I should have received my mother's last blessing, she would herself, on the same day, take me back again to Mondragone; she prayed, she insisted, she supplicated, in terms which moved the bystanders to tears, and concluded by saying that the daughter, already suffering, would die with anguish if she did not receive her mother's last blessing. His Eminence replied: —

"Let her die then; she shall never go out again."

At the solicitation of the princess, the nuncio went to the cardinal on the following day and voluntarily offered to guarantee my return to the convent. Again His Eminence replied, "No."

Finally my mother breathed her last, grieving at not being able to embrace, in her last moments, the most unfortunate of all her children. I then wrote my aunt a letter, in which I recited all the circumstances relating to this affair, which she, clever and watchful, laid before several of the cardinals. The pathetic terms in which this letter was written made an impression on the sensibilities of these dignitaries, who, each in his turn, told her that the severity of Riario had now become merely a personal matter. Shortly after this, the foregoing certificate of the physician was sent back from

Rome to the archbishop, with the customary demand for his opinion. His answer was, as usual, in the negative; but my boat seemed to be, at last, beginning to catch the breeze from the influence of persons at Rome favorable to me, and, it was enjoined upon him that he should himself select a physician in whom he had confidence to make another report.

Riario, perceiving from the nature of this requisition that I had at last found influential friends at Rome, and it not seeming to him prudent any longer to oppose serious difficulties, shuffled and delayed; but finally, put to the necessity, decided that the certificate must be signed also by the Professor Ramaglia, or Giardini.

The former excused himself; the latter came.

"Not one, alone, but a hundred certificates would I give, similar to the one already made," said he, after a minute and extended examination. "The inhumanity of which you are the victim would arouse the horror even of a barbarian. If my testimony can assist to procure you relief from your sufferings, you may be certain of having it speedily. The free and pure air is as necessary to you as bread. Where do you desire to go?"

He was sitting with the pen in his hand, ready to write. In order to escape from the diocese of Riario, I proposed the baths of Castellamare, and he approved my choice. The same day I sent the certificate to the cardinal, who, not knowing what further opposition to make, was obliged to forward it to Rome, not, however,

without taking care to accompany it with a letter, filled with poisonous doubts, and insinuations.

The person who had taken upon herself the task of serving me at Rome was looking around for some pretext for bringing the affair to a favorable conclusion, when, in reading this last letter of the cardinal, she noted a phrase which, on account of its ambiguity, served her purpose admirably. Riario had written that he feared for my *salute* (health, or salvation, depending on the sense), meaning thereby, the condition of my soul; but she adopted the first interpretation, which supposed that the cardinal had intended the health of the body!

God had decreed, finally, that my tribulations should come to an end, and that I should commence the period of rest, in the expectation of the triumph. Three days after I had sent the Breve to the cardinal, while I was working all alone in my humble room, there was a loud knocking at the door. A conversa called me to say: —

"The cardinal has come and inquires for you! Make haste!"

I remembered then the many vexations, the broken promises, and the perfidies from which I had suffered at his hands, and the sad scene of the arrest. I could have wished to get rid of him by discharging upon his head, with the congedo, the fulness of my resentment, but I said to myself: —

"It is too soon yet; with hypocrites we must finesse."

I found him in the parlatorio. I had not seen him for

four years; he seemed older by ten. The convulsions which had agitated the church and state in Italy had furrowed his face with hieroglyphics, which indicated premature old age. Riario was not what he used to be; he seemed to me to be only a shadow of himself.

I approached without bending my knees to him, and seated myself without asking permission.

"You remember the past and cannot leave off pouting," he said, with a forced smile. "I confess to having done wrong sometimes. I am only a man, — *homo sum*, — and every man is liable to make mistakes."

After so many confessions, not to have taken the offered bait would have been a great folly.

"Only," I replied, after a long silence, "only from the respect due to your sacred office, and because I believe in your moral amendment, do I condescend to throw a veil over the past."

"You are then irrevocably resolved to leave the cloister, to which you are bound by the most solemn vows?"

"I only obey the voice of God, who recalls me to life."

"And you propose to pass from under my care and to transfer yourself to another diocese, I know. Pray do not do it, for Heaven's sake. You should not repudiate the house in which you were born; the father who has instructed you and always sustained you! Yes, you are my daughter. It is true that you have been sometimes severely treated, but you may be sure, that

from this day forward, I will use towards you all the kindness and charity of a loving father."

This speech revealed to me the object of his visit; he could not bear to pocket the affront, in the eyes of the world, of seeing me snatched from his jurisdiction. An adversary, if humiliated and repentant, awakes our compassion; but reeking with hypocritical tenderness, he only inflames one's smothered ire.

"Trust you!" I exclaimed, boldly; "trust to your promises! Do you think I can believe the promises of one who keeps his word, as you did yours, to Father Spaccapietra relative to my arrest?"

"When I promised that I would not have you arrested by the police and taken back to the clausura, you, my dear, had not done what you did subsequently. Who would ever have imagined that you would have aspired to secularization; that you would have been seen in the public streets leaning upon the arms of liberals, whose names are inscribed on the black-book?"

"I will wager, that if you should meet me to-morrow on the Toledo, you would do the same thing again if you could."

"Things have taken a different turn now. I could not do it, even if I would."

"Say rather, as the wolf said to the lamb, that 'I have muddied the water where your elders used to slake their thirst.' Ah, cardinal, when, with the symbol of our redemption in your hand, you trampled upon an or-

phaned and unarmed damsel, did you think of your last hour, or of the day of judgment?"

"Let us not speak of the past. I may have sinned against you from bad counsels, or from weakness; but you certainly have not been faultless; you who, under the veil of a nun, would traffic in the infamous plots of demagogues and republicans. But again I say, let us dispense with these mutual rancors. I promise to treat you henceforth with all possible kindness and charity."

"Eminenza, my acquaintance with you has been through a long and bitter experience. In the future, I will even kiss your hand, if you wish it; but I will not give you the opportunity, in return, to regale me with a bite!"

That contemptible archetype of simulation would have quietly submitted, I believe, to any amount of outrages, if he could have thereby gained his end. He proposed to select another cloister for me, incomparably more comfortable than the present; to accord me permission to go out every day; and to procure and to provide me with a new and more liberal monthly allowance.

I cut him short, however, saying: —

"No, no, good father; better for you to be here and I there; each in his proper place. Let us determine clearly at this conference, which will be our last, the course we are severally to take. Bargains clear; friendships long."

"I shall come, from time to time, to see you, if you will permit it."

"Do not dream of it," I said, in a firm tone; and rising with the air of a queen, which might have reminded one of Elizabeth of England, in the act of dismissing the Archbishop of Canterbury, I said: —

"Too long I have endured, too oppressive to me has been, your tutelage. I have been advised to call you to account for the past; but I will not do it. It is time now, however, that, returning to your see in peace, you should take very different care for your own salvation than you have taken for the salvation of your pupil! If you do not wish to be inculpated with inhumanity; if, to the honor which is due to you, you think it necessary to retain my respect and that of the public; return, monsignore, return quickly to your see; and in the future get rid of that mania for intrigue and great power, which, placing your reputation in peril, is destroying, from day to day, your authority!"

The cardinal, discovering at last that to ensnare me again his net was already too old and too full of rents, took hold of the border of my scapulary, saying: —

"One last word: I trust that at Castellamare you will live in a ritiro?"

"I shall do as my new bishop pleases."

"And I trust, also, that you will continue to wear the black veil?"

"The brown one is not yet finished; I shall wear it."

He arose then to go out, and, as he passed by them, all the nuns threw themselves upon their knees; some for devotion touched the hem of his purple; others, with the extremities of their fingers, touched his hand, then kissed their own fingers; and they all struggled to receive his first benediction!

He descended to the last stair, and turned around to give a parting benediction to the nuns. Recognizing me in the front rank, he said: —

"Recite an Ave Maria for me," blessing me distinctly.

"*Requiem eternam!*" I replied.

This prelate was at this time acquiring a singular popularity. It was during the prevalence of the cholera, by which the capital was now fearfully afflicted, that he bestowed such care and tenderness on the sick, that our plebeians, who, more than any other class on our peninsula are given to the marvellous, pushed their admiration of his benevolence to that length as to attribute to him the gift to work miracles. This charitable soul, this vessel of mercy, had the power, as they believed, to cure the sick, and drive the disease from the house, by laying his right hand upon the heads of the sufferers!

I now opened a correspondence with the Bishop of Castellamare, and besought him not to require me to enter a convent. As to going out in the daytime, I

told him that a signora, a widow, who had been for eighteen years a *ritirata* in Mondragone, had promised to accompany me always; and the good bishop granted all my prayers.

The last service left for the poor cardinal to grant me, was to prohibit my sisters from accompanying me. He wrote to the Bishop of Castellamare to send some one to Naples for me. This conduct of the cardinal seemed very capricious to the bishop, who said to my sisters, who went to Castellamare to see him: —

"It is no matter; you can wait for your sister at Granilla, the boundary line of his diocese, and when she passes there, join her."

On the fourth of November, 1854, after three years and four months in this cruel prison, I saw the light of day again.

A nun of that class which is permitted to live outside the convent, and who are called *monache di casa*, was sent to accompany me by the bishop; neither the old lady who proposed to go with me, nor my sisters, being considered by Riario proper *compagnons du voyage* for me.

What happened next to disturb His Eminence? This same nun, who was also suffering from oppressed breathing, came for me, not in a close, but in an open carriage! Terrible infraction of the monastic rules!

At Resina we met His Eminence. Our coachman raised his hat reverentially, and the cardinal lifted his

hand to bless me; but, stupefied to see me sitting in an open carriage, which is prohibited to a cloistral nun, he remained with his hand suspended in the air, till long after we had passed each other.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ESPIONAGE.

The air of freedom — The peasant boy and his caged birds — Lay aside the nun's habit, except the veil — Ennuied with this quiet life, determine to return to Naples — Secure rooms — A priest assassinates his brother-in-law for some difference about thirty ducats, and then commits suicide — This occurring in the house where I lived, I feared the police, and moved my quarters — Victor Hugo's description of the Neapolitan police — Spies all around me — 1860 — The beginning of the end.

NEWLY restored to the living, breathing world, which I had come to think I should never see again, everything appeared new to me. I inhaled the pure air in allopathic doses, as if I were counting the hours that I should be permitted to enjoy it. At the cheerful aspect presented to my view, so entirely new, so jubilant with life, I was greatly excited. The painful remembrances of the past were scarcely remembered, were almost ready, in fact, to disappear entirely, while the street which our carriage took on our route seemed to be flanked by an immensity, whose horizon greatly exceeded my aspirations.

I signified to the bishop that I deemed it better for me now to avail myself of my newly-recovered liberty, by spending my time in the country rather than in the city; and he told me to do just as I pleased. Thirsting

for air, for light, for room, for free motion, I took my old lady friend every morning, and left the city to climb over the woody precipices of Castellamare. From these heights, which overlook the city below, the entire bay of Naples, and the more picturesque confines of this beautiful country, I gazed now upon this point, now upon that, measured the harmonic proportions and the distances, inebriated with happiness, feeling my native strength re-born in me, and even inspired by a poesy of hopes and of affections, which I had never experienced before. I was never deterred from these excursions by the inclemency of the weather, nor by the floods, which sometimes broke loose in furious torrents down the sides of the mountain, nor by the fogs of autumn, which enveloped mountain and valley, everything, in fact, in their sable folds. With my eye fixed on the most distant point of the horizon I would wait the disappearance of the mist, to find in the light of the sun, now all the more beautiful and splendid, a prospect no longer circumscribed by an enormous wall, or by bars of iron.

One day, in going over the mountain, we met a little peasant boy, who was carrying some twenty birds, which he had just caught, in a rough cage.

How much do you want for all those little prisoners?" I asked.

"Three piastres," answered the little rogue.

He sold them to me finally for one, including the

cage. I took the poor prisoners out, one by one, and restored them to their native air, joyous to see them take to their wings again, and disappear among the trees. Having once baited the boy, he came often to find me, with new cages and new prisoners. Not finding me disposed to pay his price, he finally fixed it at two grana each; and I often had the pleasure of giving to other of God's creatures the same happiness which he had conferred upon me. In seeing them escape from my hands, I said to myself:—

"If Italy should ever recover her liberty, would she not do the same for other nations still languishing in slavery?"

My hair meanwhile was left to grow again. It fell under the scissors in San Gregorio, and for thirteen years had been sheared like the wool from the sheep's back. By degrees, as my tresses grew out, I seemed to grow stronger in personal independence, and I looked forward anxiously for the time to arrive when it should assume its old appearance, and when I might look into the mirror without being disgusted with the appearance of the person I always saw there.

One other badge of servitude remained to me, and that was the monastical habit. I had already laid it aside in the house, but I was desirous to find the means to get rid of it out of doors as well, and forever. This costume not only humiliated me, but annoyed me, and encumbered me at every step. Everybody turned

to look at me, — some from curiosity; some from offended fanaticism, — while I desired to pass through the streets unobserved. Those eyes which were directed at me, it did not matter whether with benign or malign intention, were they not an onerous tribute for me to be constantly paying to an effete institution? Did they not diminish, in a great degree, the amount of the capital of my long-wished-for liberty? Determined to make a finish of that anomaly one fine morning, I called on the bishop.

"Monsignore," I said to him, "this dress gives me so much annoyance, that in order to get rid of it I have determined to expatriate myself, if you do not give me the permission to throw it aside."

"I advise you to continue to wear it," he replied; then smilingly, added, "but if you are determined to throw it off at all hazards, there is no need to ask my permission."

Some days subsequently I threw it off, and he did not appear to notice the change.

One inheritance only of the past now remained to me; this I preserved, symbol of my life of celibacy, and that was the Black Veil.

Meantime the star of Italy was ascending the firmament; small, it is true, but full of a consoling splendor. The Crimean war had procured for the monarch of Savoy (Victor Emanuel), and for the political genius of Ca-

millo Cavour, the opportunity to raise Piedmont, champion of the nationality and of the military strength of Italy, to the rank of a power in Europe. A network of mail now mysteriously connected Turin with the principal cities of the peninsula, and a group of electrical wires kept the fires of Italian patriotism constantly lighted.

This feverish condition of things was more apparent in Naples than anywhere else; in Naples, where the Bourbonic dynasty, from having violated the sanctity of contracts, found itself not only in a state of rebellion against its own subjects, but falling into discredit also in the respect of the civilized world, of which it had been virtually dispossessed since 1848. To the eyes of most of the world, Naples presented the formidable appearance of its neighboring volcano just before one of the most tremendous eruptions which the volcanic annals record. All the revolutionary parties (unfortunate heirs to the confusion which had come down from former defeats); all parties, not excepting even the Bourbonico-clerical, were anxiously looking for the precursory symptoms of the crisis which was about to explode; like Arrotino, the Florentine tribune, profoundly absorbed in watching for the conspiracy.

What could I do to assist this great work, inactive in Castellamare? My friends, deploring my exile, addressed me the most urgent appeals to return to Naples, and, thinking there might be some unimportant position there, in which my personal industry might be employed

to advantage, I threw all thoughts of danger to the winds, provided I could be of any service in the movement which I knew was about to take place.

After eleven months passed in comparative idleness, therefore, in that place, I made a second call on the bishop.

"Monsignore, if you should be driven from your see, and sent for the rest of your life into exile, would it please you?"

"It would not please anybody," he replied, because he fully understood the drift of my question.

"And it displeases even me to be in exile; and not wishing to remain forever separated from my relatives, I have resolved to return to Naples."

"And Riario? and the government? and the spies?"

"From friends, God will protect me; from enemies, I will protect myself."

A few days after this, I hired small apartments in the capital, in a new, small palace, opposite the Croce del Vasto, and my widowed friend went there to live with me. I did not go, however, without taking the precaution to hold at the same time a room at Castellamare, where I could find refuge in case of any imminent peril.

The remote situation of these lodgings, my transformed dress, and the generous tolerance of the bishop, served for a long time to protect me from the curiosity of others; and the minute circumspection which I ob-

served to preserve my incognito, would have prolonged my security if by an unforeseen accident Riario had not obtained scent of my return.

On the floor above mine there lived a priest, whom I often met upon the stairs. His sinister looks both frightened and disgusted me. One evening, in the month of February, about nine o'clock, I left the widow's room to go to bed. Between my room and the door of ingress was a little room which was lighted by a large lamp, which served also to light the stairs, the different apartments being segregated, and the palace without a porter. Just as I passed through the room, I heard two persons coming down from the floor above, engaged in a fierce altercation. A horrible cry of "*Ah, infame!*" made my hair stand on end with fright, and I then heard a man fall on the stairs, who in a weak voice cried, "You have assassinated me!"

I then heard a person run hurriedly up the stairs, and then a loud crying and sobbing in the room above mine, and, finally, the opening of a window in the rear of the palace, and the fall of a heavy body to the earth outside.

We were all, of course, terribly frightened; every person in the palace was in motion. When I heard the voices of those whom I recognized and knew to be honest men, I took the lamp and went to the door. A rivulet of blood was running under it. I retreated, horrified; but afterwards, taking courage, I returned

to see if I could render any aid to the wounded man, if he should be yet alive. I opened the door, and oh, what a horrid spectacle! . . . a young and fine-looking man was lying stretched at full length on the landing-place at my door. His intestines had been ripped up by a knife, and he was, just at that moment, in the last agonies of death. I inquired for the murderer, but no one knew anything about him. Not less unknown to all was his victim. In the mean time, the servant of the priest was heard struggling to release herself from the grasp of her mistress, crying, as loudly as she could: —

"No, I will leave the house of this brigand immediately."

And saying so, she hurried down the stairs. On arriving at the corpse, she cried and howled and wrung her hands in great distress. On being asked who was the assassin, she replied: —

"The priest!"

We all stood stupefied.

"And this *infame*, where is he?"

"He has thrown himself from the window into the garden."

The unfortunate youth had married the sister of this man nine months since, and the priest had killed him in a dispute about the paltry sum of thirty ducats, arising from a maternal dower. That evening the priest had sent for him, under the pretence of making an amicable

accommodation; but as the youth was going away, overjoyed at having concluded a peace, the priest, feigning to show him an important paper to read, followed him out upon the stairs, stopped under the lamp which lighted the stairs at my door, and there, instead of showing him the paper, plunged a large kitchen-knife into the poor young man's bowels! The crime committed, he snatched a watch from the pocket of the murdered man, and cried, "*All' assassin!*" intending to mislead the people; but, in the agitation of the moment, he forgot to throw away the bloody knife, and while crying out, actually held it in his hand. The servant, perceiving it, cried: —

"It is you who are the murderer; behold the knife!"

The priest then rushed upon her to kill her, but, hearing the noise of the people on the stairs, and seeing himself irretrievably discovered, he opened a window and threw himself out!

In the fright and confusion which followed, no one had thought to go and see whether he was alive or dead, until the arrival of the police, who then found him lying under the window with both legs and both arms broken, but still living. He died, however, the day after, in the prison of San Francesco. His sister, wife of the murdered man, six months *enciente*, was taken the same day to an insane asylum!

Frightened by this tragedy, which produced a great excitement in the city, the old lady who lived with me

was not willing any longer to remain outside of the walls of the convent, fearing, perhaps, that she might be exposed to similar frights, and on that account she and her niece left me and entered the ritiro, and I changed my lodgings, going to a less solitary quarter.

But the crime of the priest had unfortunately directed the archbishop and the police to my tracks again. Who has not heard of the wonderful keenness of the Bourbonical police, especially in hunting liberals?

"The kingdom of Naples," wrote Victor Hugo, "has but one institution, and that is the *police*. Every district has its commission for the use of the cudgel. Two *sbirri*, Aiossa and Maniscalco, reign under the king. Aiossa cudgels Naples, and Maniscalco Sicily. But the cudgel is only a Turkish instrument of punishment, and the Neapolitan government adds to it a chastisement of the Inquisition, *i. e.*, the torture. This is the way they do it. One sbirro, Bruno, holds the accused, bound head and foot, until they confess. Another sbirro, Pontillo, then places them over a large gridiron and lights a fire underneath. This is the *sedia ardente* (the warm chair). Another sbirro, Luigi Maniscalco, a relative of the above-named chief, is the inventor of an instrument into which a leg or an arm of the subject is introduced. A turn is then given to the screw and the member is fractured; this is therefore called *la macchina angelica*. Another suspends a man by two

iron rings, with his hands touching one wall and his feet the other, then jumps upon the unfortunate creature and dislocates his limbs. Then they have a small machine with which they wrench the fingers out of their places, and iron bands for the head, which are so contrived that the operator can force the eyes out of their sockets! Sometimes one escapes. Casimirro Arsimano did, but who would believe it? His wife, his sons, and his daughters, were then arrested and put upon the *sedià ardente* in his place.

"Cape Zafferano is a desert sand-beach. To the shore here several sbirri brought some sacks, in which men were tied up. They were thrown into the water, where they sustained themselves as long as they could, and were finally drawn ashore and asked if they would now *confess!* If they refused, they were immersed again, and kept there until they either confessed or died! In this manner Giovanni Vienna, of Messina, died.

"At Monreale an old man and his daughter were suspected of patriotism. The old man died under the cudgel; his daughter, who was *enciente*, was stripped naked and cudgelled until she died. All this happened in the country of Tiberius Cæsar!"

The police, then, having taken the names of all the inhabitants of the palace in which the assassination was committed, the cardinal did not fail to note my return

to Naples, and my domicile as well. I was certain, then, that if by any misfortune I should happen to fall into their hands, I might perhaps escape the *sedia ardente;* but assuredly not the cudgel.

From that day, spies were set in motion and placed upon my track in swarms, the greater part of whom were priests and monks. Priests, acting as police agents, notified of my change of domicile, buzzed around in the vicinity of my house continually, and followed me everywhere, silently, constantly, and as inseparably as my own shadow. Learning by degrees to recognize them, although disguised, I took no further notice of them. I was very careful, however, not to give them any pretext for denunciation, which they were evidently seeking, in my relations with persons suspected of liberalism. As for myself, I did not fear to be followed. On one side, the permission I had received from Rome to leave a place in which I had been forcibly confined; on the other, my change of jurisdiction, were two arguments likely to restrain the tyranny of Riario. Nevertheless, I took counsel how best to elude the vigilance of the laical and priestly spies by whom I was surrounded, and was entirely successful in the result. By which means I was able, not only to defend myself, but could even entertain my friends freely, and occasionally visit some houses which were marked with the black cross of the commissario.

To give an idea of the methods which I adopted to

elude the vigilance of the spies, it will be sufficient to say, that in the interval of six years, I changed my residence eighteen times, and my servant thirty-two times!

This system of Bourbonical espionage was of monstrous proportions. It was dressed in a thousand different forms, and took as many different attitudes, and infested the very air of the sanctuary itself. If I went into a neighboring church, the priests assailed me, even to the door, with the demand, "Do you not wish to confess?" and, establishing myself in some new house, the neighbors would watch the opportunity to catch my servant alone, and to offer her all sorts of bribes and inducements to betray me, and would inquire: —

"Is she unmarried?" "Is she a widow?" "Why does she live alone?" "Why is she not married?" "Who is her confessor?" "Has she any lover?" "Is she in correspondence with any one?" "Who were those who visited her this morning?" "And her letters, does she carry them to the post-office herself, or do you?"

And this is the way the news, pumped from the servant, passed from one to another: It went first to the druggist's,* then to the cafés, and often to the physician of the neighborhood; from there they were transmitted, under the seal of the confession to the priest, from him to the bishop, from whom they passed, *ipse facto*, to the

*It is customary for the gossips of the neighborhood, in country places in the United States, to assemble at the tavern or "store," for their usual daily canvassing of the affairs of their neighbors; while in South Italy this important business is all carried on at the druggist's.

commissariat, whence they travelled, finally, even to the cabinet of the king himself!

There once happened to live directly opposite to me an old maid, the most annoying mosquito of the clerical marshes of Naples. Her house was from morning till evening a perfect highway for monks and priests of every stripe. She would take them out upon the balcony, where she had the good taste to point me out to them with her finger, if by accident I happened to go near the window. My servant had been liberally bribed by her with presents, and by this means she kept herself informed of everything that happened in my house. To free myself from the stings of this insect, which gave me no peace, night nor day, I decided to forfeit three months' rent, which had been paid in advance, and seek an asylum in another street.

But I only went farther and fared worse; for I learned with astonishment that the master of my new house was an employé of the police! When I ascertained this fact, I was on the point of forfeiting another quarter's rent already paid, but concluded that another such a sudden change would arouse the suspicions of the police to a greater degree than ever, and on that account I decided to remain.

At the right hand and at the left, on the same floor that I occupied, were stationed two male sbirri in disguise; on the lower floor, two female sbirri watched and

gossiped: these were sisters of the master of the house.

Spies at the key-hole; spies on the stairs; spies in the court-yard and on the terrace, in short, an invasion of spies on all sides and in every possible place. This Argus with a hundred eyes having observed that I did not confess, notified the priest, and he called my servant into his house to subject her to a long and minute interrogation, particularly in respect to the names and characters of the persons who were in the habit of frequenting my rooms. Nothing came of it; the servant having affirmed that she had not seen any one there who seemed to be on very intimate terms with me. And this was true; but I was now obliged to change my servant again.

I received from the police during all this time but a single scratch!

Several months after the death of Ferdinand II., I met, near the Museum, a gentleman not less famous for his patriotism than for his learning. Exchanging the customary compliments, we spoke briefly of the aspect things were assuming in Italy in consequence of the imbecile government of Francesco II.; then, looking carefully around, this gentleman drew from his pocket a letter which he consigned to me. I placed it in my bosom, not, however, without perceiving that it had already been under the eyes of the police, and, as a consequence, not without being sure of receiving a visit on the morrow from some of the sbirri, to render an account of it.

And so it turned out.

Early in the morning I received a visit from one of the aids of Aiossa, who, with unaccustomed politeness, asked me when, where, and by what means, I had made the acquaintance of Signor B—— G——; if he was in the habit of visiting me; and what he had said to me the day before, etc., etc.

To all of which I replied in a manner which seemed to satisfy him.

"And the paper which he placed in your hands," he asked, finally; "will you do me the favor to allow me to see it a moment?"

"Here it is," I replied, promptly, and with entire self-possession; and taking up a folded newspaper which I had laid on my desk to meet the case, I handed it to him with a studied politeness, which I designed to be quite equal to his.

The morning of June 25, 1860, all the street-corners of Naples were crowded with people of all classes, intent on reading a government manifesto, with which the walls had been placarded. It was an act of the sovereign, by which the young Heliogabalus, egged on by the revolt in Sicily, by the successes of Garibaldi, by the threatening attitude of affairs in his own capital and in the neighboring provinces, by the invasive intentions, as he characterized them, of the house of Savoy, and by the indifference of cabinets, promised to his subjects, *representative*,

Italian and *national* institutions, and a league with the King of Sardinia; he accepted the tricolor, and intimated that Sicily should have analogous institutions.

After reading it, every one shrugged his shoulders with an air of doubt as well as disgust.

"What does it say?" I demanded of my companion, who, in order to read it, had forced his way through the crowd.

"It is," he replied, "the last will and testament of a merchant, who has failed for the fifth time!"

Here is an extract from an address of the central committee of Naples to the people of the city, which appeared a few hours later: —

"All the apparent concessions, offered on account of the urgency of the times, and fully understood as intended only to retard the full and complete operation of the national regeneration, will be welcomed only with disdain!"

CHAPTER XXV.

LIBERTY.

"Italia Una"—The breaking out of the revolution all over Italy—Extracts from a great poem—Francesco II.—Address of a celebrated republican to him—September 7, 1860, in Naples, the day of Garibaldi's public reception—Deposit my veil in the altar of San Gennaro—Make the acquaintance of a gentleman whom I marry.

While in those magical words, "Italia Una!" which, resounding from one extremity of the peninsula to the other, revived the aspirations of twenty centuries, and verified the predictions of all profound thinkers,—while the heroic captain, *dei mille*, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was achieving almost miracles in the field, a patriotic voice was heard,—one which spoke in tones louder than the despot's cannon. It was the voice of a poet, who, for his genius, for his ardent love of liberty, for his long exile, has been admitted to citizenship by every liberal nation on the earth. It was the voice prophetical, which raised the hymn of glory for regenerated Italy.

"The sepulchres are opening! From tomb to tomb, the cry is *Resuscitate!* It is more than life; it is an apotheosis! Oh, it is a supreme palpitation of the

heart, when one who has been humiliated, rises again to indignation; when the splendors which for many centuries have been eclipsed, reappear, brilliant and terrible; when Stamboul is once again Byzantium; when Setiniah returns to Athens, and Rome returns to Rome!

"Let us all applaud Italy! Let us glorify this land of great productions; *Alma parens!* Among nations like this, certain abstract dogmas clothe the reality; are made visible and palpable. This nation is a virgin for honor, and a mother from her inexhaustible fecundity.

"You, who listen to me, figure to yourselves this magic vision. Italy free! Free from the Gulf of Taranto to the lagunes of San Marco (for, on thy tomb, I swear to thee, O Manin, that Venice shall also take part in the celebration), say, can you figure to yourself this vision, which is, to-day, prophecy, but which, to-morrow, shall be history? Italians, as a nation, have now done with tyrants and falsehoods, simulations, ashes, and darkness! All these have disappeared! Italy exists! Italy is Italy!

"Yes, that which was but now a geographical expression has become a nation; where there was only a corpse, there is now a soul; where there was a worm, there now stands an archangel, the radiant cherub of civilized Christianity! Liberty is on her feet, with expanded wings! Italy, the great defunct, is awakened! Behold her! she is risen, and smiles compassionately on

all the human race. She says to Greece, 'I am thy daughter!' and to France, 'I am thy mother!'

"A sovereign nation, she has around her, her poets, her orators, her artists, her philosophers, her great citizens; all these councillors of humanity, these conscript fathers of universal intelligence; all members of the Senate of ages, while on the right hand and on the left, stand those two great names of world-wide renown, Dante and Michael Angelo! What a triumph! What an event! What a marvellous phenomenon! The most majestic of accomplished facts, which at one flash illuminates that magnificent Pleiades of sister cities, Milan, Turin, Genoa, Florence, Bologna, Pisa, Siena, Parma, Palermo, Messina, Naples, Verona, Venice, and Rome!

"Italy is rising; behold, she walks; *incessupatuit dea;* she shines resplendently; exulting in her genius, to the entire world she communicates the fever of progress and Europe is electrified by this portentous light! There will not be less ecstasy in the eyes of the people, less sublime happiness in their faces, less admiration, less joy and transport for this new light upon the earth, than there would be at the appearance of a new and entirely unexpected comet in the heavens!"

Educated in the perfidious school of his fathers, Francesco II., *l' infame* of our day, hoped, in the meanwhile, to hold on to power by amusing his subjects, as well as the rest of Italy and Europe, until the opportu-

nity should arrive to fill Naples again with Austrian bayonets. Blind to the destructive stream of lava which was being thrown up every day, and which was narrowing more and more the circle of his influence; deaf to the counsels of a wise kinsman, as he was to the subterranean tones of the volcano under his throne, he determined to depend only upon the litanies of the priests, and the traditional ignorance of the rabble.

But the time of the Fra Diavolos, of the Ruffis, of the Maria Carolines, of the Actons and of the Germans, was already past; already the mortal remains of Caracciolo returned from the bottom of the sea and floated before the eyes of evil-doers on its surface; from the gibbet of Pagano and from that of Bandiera, along that street of expiation, saturated with the purest blood of Italy, resounded but one cry: "Death to the Bourbons!" "Long live the Prince who will extend his hand to the nation!"

Finally, the great decrees of Providence were consummated. The presentiments of so many centuries took form and action in one of the most remarkable revolutions in the history of the world. The last monarch of the Capeti was vanishing from the scene like a ghost at the appearance of day, while the cruciform ensign of Savoy, emblem of independence and of unity, inaugurating the reign of the national conscience, was unfolded on almost all the mountain heights of the peninsula.

I remember an address which expresses with admira-

ble fidelity and conciseness the sentiments of the people of Naples and of Sicily, at the moment when the young scion of the Ferdinands suddenly embarked for Gaeta.

It is the "adieu" which an old emigré sent to the Bourbon in epistolary form, in the name of the Italians of the South. In the belief that it will be gratifying to the reader, I print the letter entire; its merit will compensate for its length.

"SIRE: —

"Whilst your enemies accompany you with maledictions and your friends with words of contempt, it may be permitted to a patriot to take leave of you with a kind of adieu to which you have never been accustomed to listen, — the truth, which posterity will tell and which courtiers will hide.

"The battle of Velletri gave the throne to your family; the conquest of Reggio took it away. Between these two events one hundred and twenty-six years intervene. Let us now make up the balance-sheet with the inheritance you leave.

"The history of no other people offers a spectacle to compare with that of Naples. A hundred and twenty-six years of existence have been a hundred and twenty-six years of insurrection almost permanent; a hundred and twenty-six years of reign which has caused a moral expropriation of the virility and of the intelligence of this people. The primary care of your first ancestor was to

barricade these provinces of Italy in the autonomy of a state : — Italians under the dominion of Spain; that made us Neapolitans. We had been one family with Milan, with Parma, with Sicily, governed by bad masters, and trembling under bad masters.

" Charles III. cut us loose. And when the people of France in '89 called upon the people and princes of Europe to examine the title-deeds to their thrones, this family, united by the same chain, by the same griefs, by the same miseries, found themselves disseminated, and isolated, and individualized. We were like the ancient states of France, whose common dangers and common laws formed them into a nation; your great grandfather made of Italy a Germany of *capuchins;* an original sin which no baptism of blood, or of tears, can ever cancel. King Ferdinand completed the work of isolation. He did more. He mixed, very stupidly, into coalitions against France, which twice brought on foreign occupation. He threw the kingdom irreclaimably into the lost fortunes of Austria, and she took our men, money, and ships, as considerations for coming to the rescue. He deprived us of liberty and denied us every human right, and when we opened our eyes to the sun with which the political agitators of France illuminated the world, King Ferdinand made the kingdom bloody with gibbets, which served to give variety to the amusements. He sold us to the English, after having prostrated us before Austria. When he fled, he robbed us;

he robbed us like a highwayman, insulting us by saying that he would leave us only '*gli occhi per piangere*' (eyes with which to weep). He stole the deposits of the banks and of the pawnbrokers; burned ships, stripped the royal palace, and caluminated us.

"Then returning from exile he vituperated and killed as many as he could; killed the very best; exterminated all who thought, all who felt generously; all who honored Italy, and all whose hearts palpitated with love of country.

"Shadows began to fall upon the kingdom. When the French Republic, the Directory, and the First Consul spread over Europe, by handfuls, the glory of victories, of codes, of rules of the Institute, of administrative organizations; and striking the Caliph of Rome, said to him: 'Thou art a priest and canst not be a king!' then King Ferdinand began to act the king-buffoon, and to work the demolition of all the advantages we had derived from the French occupation; only respecting the aggravated system of subsidies. Then perjuring himself when he had sworn to make us free, he consigned us, bound hand and foot to Austria; overran the kingdom with German soldiers, and gave us up to robbery and pillage. Then he placed upon our necks the implacable yoke of conventions; contaminated us with monks and priests; created the police which swallowed up the kingdom and deluged it with crime, and enfeoffed us like freehold property in the hands of courtesans and blackguards.

"Sardanapalus passed away. What remained of him? What step had he taken to lead this people in the path of progress? except that of cutting off the tail (*queue*) of his wig? What free institutions remain to us as an inheritance of the great commotion excited by the French revolution, except the conservation of the land-tax and the standing army? What benefits did he leave to us except the fathers of the Company of Jesus, and a Canosa ministry? He took away everything from us; bequeathing us only Francesco, together with the hatred not yet appeased which exists between the Neapolitans and Sicilians.

"Sire, tell us for what we must thank you; for what we must remember the reign of Ferdinand I.? Is it for his many acts of contempt, of blood, of defamation? Or for the prisons he left filled, or for the exile in which so many eminent Italians perished miserably? Perhaps for the *bianco terrore* which enveloped the kingdom like a winding sheet? or for the occupation of the Austrian army? Must we remember the public debt — the *Giunto di Stato* — of the supremacy of Rome; of the budget (annual tax) redoubled; of the civil administration concentrated in the police, and of a police which is called Canosa? The Jesuit and the gendarme the first functionaries of the state; the *tripla censura* on the productions of genius; the axiom, *de Deo pauca*, *de rege nihil*, elevated to a dogma of State — a precept of the code?

"Sire, is it for these things that we must remember you? Is is for such things we must respect in you the descendant of King Nason? Is it on this account that, in going away, you invoke the justice of God; the sanction of a just public; that you appeal to diplomacy, to treaties, to history, to force, to reasons of state? Sire, are these the titles which consecrate you King of Naples? or do we forget some one of them? Yes, we forget the orgies of Caroline — a Semiramide worthy the court of assizes; the lover of Emma Leona; we forget the capitulation of Nelson; the rascalities of Cardinal Ruffo; we forget the financial operations of the Medici; the *maquignonnage* of the throne at the Court of Vienna, by which we paid six millions of the Rothschild loan; the secret articles of the Treaty of Laybach, and that of Verona. . . . Sire, shall we be ungrateful if we forget these things? Are these the titles which you invoke?

"And yet, sire, King Lazzaroni seems to have been the best of your race; King Francesco was a terrible dawn of blood; Bosco demolished, cries to God for justice; the recollection of De Matteis still makes the Calabrians tremble with terror; and the traffickings of Viglia and De Simone still keep the eyes of the angel of modesty veiled. The catacombs of the Carbonari; the inquisitions of the State; the Giunti of Macri, of De Girola, and of Janet, — made the hair of those stand on end who were then brought into contact with

Mazza, Governa, or Aiossa. For five years five millions of men dared not to breathe for fear of revealing the fact of their existence. The church enveloped the kingdom under its black cassock, and said: 'I am the State!' The genadarme opened a gigantic handcuff, and said: 'This is for you!'

"King Francesco, in short, was nothing but an extinguisher; his government, an air-pump. Canosa drew blood; Medici drew gold; and the rest labored, each vying with the other to rob us of honor, of mind, of conscience, of moral life. Tommasi trafficked with justice; Nunziante and Pastore, with the army. Religion became an instrument of torture, and the principal weapon of the throne; the power supreme was the police. This posthumous Claudius, who had always lived among spectres, remorses, perjuries, and rancors, since the insurrection of 1820, thirsty for blood and for vengeance, implacable as Sylla, a cold and calculating hangman, — after five years, died. Whither did he go?

"He inherited a nation; he left a corpse. He found here the Austrians, scurvy hirelings; he left us the Swiss, the ignominy of their own country, the enduring misery of ours. He found the Muratists and the Constitutionalists of '20; he left us the Canosini and the Liguoristi; the university gorged with priests, and the treasury empty by the journey to Spain. For military glory, the capitulation of Tripoli; for a decoration, 'the order of merit;' the recompense of spies and policemen;

the navy destroyed, and Prince Metternich sovereign in fact. The public debt which Ferdinand found, in 1815, at ninety-four thousand ducats per annum, and the Parliament of 1820 had purified to one million four hundred and four thousand, Francesco left at three million one hundred and ninety thousand eight hundred and fifty ducats, besides four and a half millions of floating debt! The budget which he found at twenty-three millions, he left at nearly twenty seven; with a million and three hundred thousand ducats of pensions *of grace*, granted to reward the most shameful and infamous services!

"We have endeavored, Sire, to find some one thing that does credit to your family; but we find only the unbridled licentiousness of Queen Isabella; we have desired to cite some act which is gratefully remembered by the Neapolitans, or respected in Italy, and find only the execution of Cilento; the snare laid for the Capozzoli; the journey to Rome to kiss the Pope's foot, and that to Milan to bend the knee to Metternich. Alas, Sire, do we forget any benefits, except the change of Canosa for Tonti? Do we omit any act of your race, except the three millions we paid for the illogical mosque of San Francesco di Paola? What remained to our fathers of the reign of Francesco, except an interminable malediction, — a cry of fright and horror!

"If to establish your right, you have, Sire, any other titles besides that of 'by the grace of God,' produce

them; for inheritance from your two nearest ancestors is not sufficient to save the throne for you, although you are out of our reach; nor will it save your head, if in fighting with us it should fall into our hands!

"And your father, has he afforded any better illustration of your dynasty? What did he do for the nation? Did he advance our civilization a single step? Did he render his subjects any more highly esteemed in Europe, more prosperous and free at home, more thought of in other parts of Italy! Ah, Sire, for one hundred and twenty-six years, Naples has been repeating the old story of the old woman of Dionysius. Francesco showed how just, liberal, and humane, was King *Pulcinella;* King *Bomba* made us wish for King *Cappio;** and your Majesty pays for all!

"Ferdinand II! What can I say to your majesty which Europe does not already know? Where is there a man that is so much despised and execrated among men? Foreign parliaments have from the height of their tribunals covered him with insults; the press has exhausted the vocabulary of infamy! He was the Napoleon of shame! and his subjects were permanently in insurrection.

"In 1830 it was Palermo; in '32 was the conspiracy

*Ferdinand I. was father of Francesco I. and was nicknamed *Pulcinella*, because of his trivial character. Francesco I. was the father of Ferdinand II. who was called King *Bomba*. King *Cappio* was a nickname given to Francesco I. when he rewarded large numbers of the Carbonari with the gibbet, whom he had already flattered with the most liberal promises, while he was a fugitive in Sicily and wanted their support.

of Frate Angelo Peluso; in '34, the conspiracy of Rossaroll; in '35, the conspiracy of San Carlo, in which Orazio Mazza made his first essay in the trade of informer; in '37, the rebellion in Sicily; in '38, that of Cosenza and of Aquila; in '41, Aquila again; in '44, Cosenza again; in the same year, the expedition of the Bandiera in Calabria; in '46, Gerace, Reggio, and Cilento; and in '48, in the whole kingdom!

"No prince for a longer time, ever held the axe extended over the heads of his subjects, or used it with more harshness. After the proclamation of the statute, he perjured himself; then there was the terrible revolution of May 15; then an implacable struggle between the people and the king; and above all this, the head of the Medusa of Austria, more terrific even than the king himself, more execrated than even Peccheneda, Mazza, Governa, or Aiossa.

"Your ancestors, Sire, what else were they but Columbuses, of the sbirro type? Genius was necessary to create Canosa, Intonti, Del Caretto, and Campagna. A reformer of finance, Ferdinand walked out, leaving us a public debt of about twelve millions, and a budget of thirty-nine millions, without having, as Victor Emanuel has done, built railroads for the people, and made war for the regeneration of Italy. A reformer of the administration, Ferdinand produced the Longobardis, the Carafa, the Aiossa, the De Liquoris, and D'Urso, Ferdinand Troya and Murena; placed sbirri and spies in

Episcopal sees, in intendencies, in tribunals, at the receipt of customs, in the administration of finance, in diplomatic posts. Over all there was a stain of mud, of blood; — a perjurer; an imbecile! As a commander of soldiers, Ferdinand drained the populace to the dregs, in order that he might arrive at the glory of the hyperbolical flight from Velletri and his army at the defeat of Sicily, but not of the Sicilians and to the dissolution of the corps in Calabria. Director of religion, Ferdinand invented a species concordat of police, and drove all the clergy to take up arms, — some to overturn the throne, others to spread treasonable vespers among the people; Antonelli in some places, very generally a hatred of Victor Emanuel, and Christ nowhere. In order to reign, — and not a single day tranquil even when shut up in his Escurial at Gaeta, hated, hating, — Ferdinand committed 897 political assassinations, and confined 15,261 citizens in penitentiaries; condemned 73,000 to prisons, and held under surveillance more than 200,000 persons in Naples and Sicily! Contrasted with him, the Duke of Alva was an angel of peace!

"Ferdinand had bombs to exterminate his subjects, and courteous words only for the enemies of Italy. Insolent in prosperity, whenever he could be so with impunity, he hurried into pusillanimity when danger seized him by the throat. The United States of America demanded an unjust indemnity, and he paid it. England imposed enormous conditions on sulphur, and

he submitted to them. Piedmont demanded the restitution of the Cagliari, and he made it. Talarico (even Talarico!) offered terms to surrender himself, and he sent his minister to treat with the brigand. No one in the world more readily than he stooped to kiss the filthy hands of the priests and the monks. As king, he authorized his functionaries to rob, and to steal, and divided in common with them the proceeds of the robberies; then he became an usurer, like the Duke of Modena, and associated himself with receivers of bribes to starve his kingdom. There is not, in short, a single act of your father's life which is not disgraceful or criminal. . . . He was king only by the negation of God!

"And after twenty-nine years' reign, what remains of him? A nickname only: *Bomba;* and we may add, Sire, your expulsion is the end of the Bourbon dynasty. Of this beautiful country, *bacio di Dio*, he made a golgotha of the people! Now they rise again, and like the angel in Milton, cry, 'Away, race of Cain! Be ye cursed! cursed! cursed!'

"You, meanwhile, proclaim yourself innocent; you, going away, implore our compassion upon your youth and for your understanding. Excuse us; if God cut you out for a Franciscan friar, why should you persist in remaining king? You are culpable, even you, like all your predecessors; more, even, than they. They sinned, principally, against the people; you, against Italy. If Venice be still subject to Austria, it is your

fault. If the pope still holds Rome, the fault is yours! . . . . Yes, you committed the greatest of crimes against Italy and the Italians, when, on the field of Lombardy, the French and the Italian soldiers struggled side by side with the everlasting enemy of Italy, and your soldiers were not found there! If Italy had had there the hundred thousand soldiers subject to your command, Napoleon III. would not have dared to make the infamous treaty of peace of Villafranca! You proclaim yourself innocent! Excuse us; you may be incapable; innocent, no! You are the Judah of Italy, and for you there is no mercy!

"And what is your conduct at this moment?

"I have no desire to sadden your agony, because your last attempts against the Neapolitan people, and against Italy, will bring you but little glory. You endeavored to defend yourself in Sicily, in the Calabrias, in the Principati, in the capital itself; the sword is broken in your hand. Now, running away, you would imitate the Duke of Modena, by carrying off the treasury, jewels, pictures, and furniture, and would even take with you whole regiments of troops, and all our ships of war. Now, you would tempt fortune by making a desperate resistance between the Volturno and the Garigliano. That which you stole, like Ferdinand I., — that which you have accumulated, through drops of our blood, and turned into gold,—take with you, and may God not call you to an account for the poor man's mouthful of bread.

"But to consign our lives and our navy to Austria, to provoke new fratricidal struggles, behind the strong walls of Capua and Gaeta, — this is too much. Be careful, however; fortune plays sad pranks, and the patience of the people is exhausted. Louis XVI., would he ever have believed that he could be arrested in the public streets, and sent off to the guillotine? James II. and Charles X. and Louis Philippe, would they ever have believed that they were destined to consume their lives in exile? Gaeta is not impregnable. . . . . And if we should happen to take it?

"Sire, to know how to fall gracefully, is the most difficult lesson for kings to learn. You could not end your career like Julian, like Manfred, like Kosciusko; it would be ingenuous to pretend for you, the end of Sylla, or that of Charles V., or that of Christine of Sweden, or the act of Fontainebleau. Educated as a capuchin, you cannot end your career like a man. Do, then, as Cæsar did when dying, cover your head . . . and leave Italy. You are still young. To qualify yourself for the dignity of a king, is impossible. You would however command esteem, both as a man and as an Italian, if, when we shall be drawn up, in order of battle, under the walls of Verona, you would imitate your young relative, the Duke of Chartres, by taking up the musket of a volunteer, and joining the ranks of the Italians.

"A similar act of abnegation on your part would

make you the greatest of your family, from the '*fowl-in-the-pot*' king, to your own father, of fatal memory. Surrounded by vile courtiers, who beg for your smiles and your last favors, you would not to-day be able properly to estimate the counsels of an enemy. When you shall have slept the serene sleep of exile, and find yourself on the free soil of England, purified from the miasma of the royal palace, then, perhaps, you will think it less strange, and remember it.

"Sire, depart without anger or rancor, because we feel neither the one nor the other for you. We pardon you. The people rarely remember their wrongs, and they know how to show themselves magnanimous. Your youth, although darkened by some atrocious acts, affects us still, like the aurora of the seas of the south, which a passing cloud veils and hides. This people has a poetic heart, but not yet a poetic mind. To brave maledictions and retaliations, in order to obtain a success as your father did, may be justified and allowed to pass; but to do as you have done, is a manœuvre in the spectacle of a comic opera, which is not consistent with the dignity of a prince, the character of a Christian, nor the work of a citizen. You will not have any battalions ready to die for you at your door!

"Adieu, Sire; resign yourself to the justice of men, if you wish that God should be just! Endure with greatness of soul the punishment for the crimes of your fathers! Be able to say to yourself, every hour of your

life, 'I shed so much blood, and not more than was necessary to save my honor;' conduct yourself like a gentleman, since you have ceased to be a king. Be of our times, up to the level of the century, of civilization, of science; bow your head reverently before the new law of right, which is eternal, of the people, of the nation; renounce all unfruitful and criminal attempts to regain your throne. Surround yourself with men who are your superiors and not your lackeys, who instil into your mind the bitterness of hate, and the conceits of their foolish ambitions.

"Adieu, Sire. May Heaven grant that this leave without bitterness, which in the name of all the kingdom we now take of you, may not be changed into the farewell of Medea."

Brilliant and sparkling, as on the summit of Thabor, returned to Naples the same sun which on the evening before had shed its departing rays on the funeral of the Bourbon dynasty.

The seventh of September, 1860, is a date memorable in the history of Naples: citing which, there will be no necessity to add a word. There was but little sleep in the city the preceding night. The preparations for the reception of the great liberator were spontaneous and popular. Daylight found everybody astir in Naples. The principal streets were crowded by more than a hundred thousand persons, mostly armed, in apprehension

of some reactionary movement. Windows, balconies, terraces and even roofs were thronged with spectators. In the Toledo, there was no passing; not a house but what was profusely dressed with the national emblems, or hung with tapestries; and in that wild and joyous agitation, in that delirium, there was a continual outpouring of martial and patriotic songs; an uninterupted roar of voices, which soon became hoarse with their excessive "vivas" for Italy, Naples, and Garibaldi!

I was seized with the ambition to be the first to take the great liberator by the hand, and, in gratifying it, I endangered my life. I knew the route he was to take, and determined to station myself at the large door of the "Foresteria," where the hero was obliged to descend from his carriage. Thanks to the exertions of several of my acquaintances, I succeeded for a moment to settle myself there, but the crowd increasing, fearfully, I was nearly crushed and almost died from asphyxia. My vanity was satisfied a little later, however, in the piazza of the cathedral, in the midst of the deafening acclamations of the people, in the shadow of a hundred tricolored banners, which were flying over my head, and under showers of flowers, which were rained down from all the windows in the neighborhood.

The unusual excitement of the day had paled the cheek of the hero. The pallor of his countenance expressed a sadness, which contrasted strongly, with the delirious inebriety of his admirers. Only in his eye was observed

the innate greatness of his soul; that eye, superior to any disturbance of the senses, seemed fixed at that moment upon the bastions of Mantua.

The warriors of heroic Greece were honored as demigods in their day; those of modern times have had statues; but no hero, either ancient or modern, ever received, during his lifetime, so many cordial embraces from the people as did Garibaldi in a single day in Naples.

And of my own sensations, what shall I say?

With eyes moistened with tears of joy, I raised my thoughts to Heaven, and from the bottom of my heart returned thanks to God for three things: for having twice saved me from my own desperation; for having released me from the despotism of priests and from the persecution of spies; and for having permitted me to be a spectator of one among the grandest and most touching scenes of a Christian regeneration, which the world has ever seen.

But of what importance now and henceforth are my sensations. Tiresome superfluities. The drama is concluded. My story finishes with this day, which for Italy is a day of regeneration. That "I" which, dressed in mourning, has perhaps drawn upon your sympathies, gentle reader, thus far only, because around you all was grief and silence, now disappears like a little star on the appearance of the god of day.

And my veil?

While the priests of San Gennaro, in order to avoid the solemnity of a Te Deum, and to escape the customary prayers, "Save thy people and thy patrimony, O God!" detained Garibaldi with the idle inspection of their treasures, I, among others, accompanied him; and while there, I took off my veil from my head and deposited it upon the altar, thus restoring to the church what it had bestowed upon me twenty years before. Votum Feci. Gratiam Accepi.

From that moment the last link that connected me with the monastic life was severed, and the name of *cittadina* (citizeness), which, given to all, contains no distinction, became for me the most appropriate title; better, even, than the antique *Civus Romanus*. Therefore, whenever any one thenceforward called me "sister," or "canoness," I interrupted them saying: —

"Call me cittadina, if you please, and if you would add any distinction, say that citizeness, who provoked and promoted *il Plebiscito* of the women of Naples." If I am no longer a friend to the *sottana nera*, I do not certainly retain any resentment towards it. I deposited all my rancor, with my veil, on the altar.

And for many practical lessons in life, I acknowledge myself indebted to my long seclusion. If, in the course of twenty years, my destiny had not riveted to my feet the chain of the galleys, if I had married young, should I, in the school of the world, have learned as well to discern the wicked passions at their birth; those pas-

sions which abound in the close atmosphere of the convent, and which feed upon anger, rancor, jealousies, and suspicions?

. . . . . .

About this time I made the acquaintance of a middle aged man, whose elevated sentiments, in harmony with the firmness of his character, captivated my respect and rendered him, to my mind, greatly superior to the generality of those individuals who boast of a princely lineage.

He wore engraved on his heart the picture of redeemed Italy, and upon his head, a large cicatrice, the record of a wound received on the 15th of May from the sword of a Swiss mercenary. The conformity of our opinions and vicissitudes strengthened our friendship. We determined, shortly after, to consecrate our sympathies with the impress of religion, and we applied to the church for its benediction.

The church formally refused its assent!

Demands and supplications were in vain before that inexorable and pyramidal *non possumus*. We were obliged to call upon a clergyman of an opposite faith for a blessing on our marriage!

Behold me finally happy.

By the side of a husband who adores me, to whom I respond with equal affection, I find myself in the state

in which God placed woman at the close of the first week of the creation.

Why, fulfilling the offices of a good wife, of a good mother, of a good citizen, why may I not aspire even to the treasury of the Divine compassion?

THE END.

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Feb. 2006

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 017 425 769 3